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THE NEWSPAPER FOR ASHFORD, TENTERDEN AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES

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NEW HOME: The bodies of Martin Jones and wife Janette were found at their farmhouse in Brabourne Lees

■ BY ED HILL AND NICK AMES

THE grandparents found blasted to death in their isolated farmhouse are remembered by shocked friends as part of a close family.

Central heating engineer Martin Jones, 64, is believed to have murdered his wife Janette, 56, then turned his shotgun on himself.

The couple's bodies were found at their rented farmhouse in Brabourne Lees by their daughter Clare who went inside when she got no answer at the door.

More than 20 police officers, many of them armed, descended on the village after the 999 call to alert them last Wednesday evening.

Before moving to Brabourne Lees six months ago, the Jones lived for more than 10 years in Hoppers Way, Singleton, where they were remembered fondly.

A former neighbour alongside the detached house, Andrew Baker, said: "We knew them for about six years. It was just total shock when we heard. They were always a really close family. I knew he did go shooting."

"We are just really sorry for the family. I think they had lived here since the house was built. The house had been a show home. They moved to Brabourne to be closer to their daughter."

Another neighbour, who did not wish to be named, said: "She was involved in a nasty car accident for which she got quite a lot of compensation. They put their house on the market and left the same day."

"I know they split up a couple of times but they got back together again."

"They were a very close family and when we

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2 The intriguing tale of the Santa's reindeer and the JCB, which looks after them. **Search 'JCB'**



3 How King Henry II would have celebrated Christmas 800 years ago at Dover Castle. **Search 'King'**

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LAUNCH: Hilary Lister is presented with flowers at the launch of the Active Ashford programme

Bursary scheme will give disabled athletes a chance

■ BY ED HILL

A FUNDING scheme to help disabled athletes achieve their sporting goals was launched this week by a record-breaking quadriplegic sailor.

Hilary Lister is the first woman with such a severe condition to sail across the Channel and around the Isle of Wight. In 2007 she was the first to sail around the UK using a specially constructed boat controlled by blowing and sucking air through two plastic tubes.

The bursary scheme, backed by the council's Active Ashford programme and the Designer Outlet, was launched to coincide with the 1,000-day run up to the Olympics in 2012.

It will give disabled people across the borough the chance to take part in various sports and physical activities, whether they are newcomers or professionals needing extra help.

Hilary Lister explained some of the problems that can face disabled athletes looking for funding.

She said: "It's important there is a separate sports bursary for people with disabilities, who often find it more expensive to train and to attend competitions than the able-bodied."

"I am delighted to support the

Active Ashford bursary system, and am honoured to be patron."

Hilary was struck down by the degenerative disease reflex sympathetic dystrophy aged just 15, which eventually cost her the use of her limbs.

Designer outlet manager David Maddison presented Hilary and Active Ashford with a cheque for £3,500 towards the bursary, and pledged his long-term support for the scheme.

He said: "Hilary is a true inspiration and she will be able to rely on our continued support in the vital years leading up to the 2012 Olympics."

The bursary will help disabled sportsmen meet the costs of travelling, coaching, equipment and entrance fees to events and competitions, as well as introducing Ashford's excellent sporting facilities to people who previously felt unable to use them.

Chair of Active Ashford, Graham Galpin, said: "I am delighted such an important business partner as the Outlet Centre has provided this much-needed assistance to the Active Ashford Disability Bursary."

"Hilary's achievements should act as an example to disabled sportspeople to utilise the bursary so that they can achieve their sporting goals. I hope this bursary helps our local athletes on their way to London 2012."

For further information visit the website www.activeashford.co.uk or call 01233 330232.

'I know they split a couple of times...'

CONTINUED FROM FRONT lived here we would see their grandchildren all the time."

The couple's daughter Clare, 34, lives with her partner and three children less than a mile from the farmhouse.

Police said they recovered two shotguns from the house and are not looking for anyone else following the deaths.

Mr Jones was a central heating engineer and Mrs Jones had worked for the NHS until an accident for which she received a compensation payout.

A post mortem on Friday confirmed the couple died from gunshot wounds.

An inquest has been opened and adjourned and coroner has been informed.

Green shoots seen at business conference

BUSINESSES say they are seeing signs the economy is improving.

Their comments came after speech was given by Bank of England agent Phil Eckersley at a business conference held at Eureka Park.

Mr Eckersley gave a presentation on economic developments in the UK and South East and the findings of the most recent inflation report.

More than 50 per cent of those attending said they were starting to see recovery in the town.

Judith Armit, managing director of Ashford's Future, said: "Phil Eckersley's tour of the economic horizon was masterful."

"Only five out of 80 companies in attendance considered they were still in recession, so this is a strong testament to Ashford's status as a sustainable business location during uncertain financial times."

Folk fans set for extra day at annual festival

THE Tenterden Folk Festival will be adding an extra day to its programme. The festival will now begin on the Thursday at the end of next September.

The organisers will also be staging more concerts throughout the year at venues in Tenterden and in St Mary's Church in Ashford.

Alan Castle, organiser of the festival, said: "We are also talking to both Kent and East Sussex Railway and The Sinden Theatre about further joint events and will be working with Equator to promote more joint events in Ashford in the spring."

For more folk concert details, visit www.tenterdenfolkfestival.com.

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For information and advice on travelling in Kent and for all our traffic regulation orders, please see the Kent on Saturday or the Kent on Sunday or visit our website at www.kent.gov.uk/highways

Community centre for muslims given go ahead

■ BY ED HILL

PLANS to transform the South Eastern Tavern into a Muslim community centre have been unanimously passed by the council's planning committee.

The Torrington Road pub, which was refurbished by owners Shepherd Neame in 2007, has been closed since April, and was once a popular live music venue.

The controversial scheme received more than 150 objections from neighbours claiming it would create parking problems and alter the character of the neighborhood.

However, at last Wednesday's meeting the committee agreed with planning officers who said the prayer and community centre was likely to cause no more disruption than the existing public house.

Support groups

Shafi Khan from the Ashford Muslim Association said: "We are really happy it has been passed and just really pleased that the council understood the reasons why we needed the space."

"Up until now we did not have our own venue. Our objective was to have a place where we could set up schemes such as the mother and toddler groups and elderly support groups to help build stronger links with the community."

Land next to the site will be leased to provide about fifteen parking bays and more spaces will be created at the rear of the building when



ISLAMIC VENUE: The South East Tavern will become a Muslim community centre after members gave the green light

funds become available, according to community leaders.

Mr Khan said he anticipated building work would take about three weeks to complete and the centre would open as soon as possible.

Mr Kahn said: "It is in a good location. We hope people will accept us and we will learn to live together. We are not here to make any trouble."

He said the money to transform the pub

would come entirely from the Muslim community and no public money would be involved.

Ashford council's neighborhood development officer, Simon Bannister, said: "The community network has been in contact with the applicants throughout the planning process, and we fully support the scheme."

"We believe the new centre is needed and it will help promote understanding of the Muslim faith as well as reducing prejudices."



NEW LOOK: Artist's impression of the new Gateway Plus Centre

Thumbs up for Church Street regeneration

PLANS to transform the old library in Church Street have been backed by the borough's planning committee.

The so-called Gateway Plus Centre will include housing, and a new library, as well as being the new town registry office.

It will also have rooms for social care, adult education classes, space for art exhibitions and a café.

The new centre will be built on the existing library site and should open its doors in 2011.

Cllr John Kemp, portfolio holder for planning and development, said: "As the town grows it is important public services keep pace."

"Residents will be able to walk into a stunning building, pick up a book, receive advice or take in a course and then have a coffee."

The £7.6 million scheme is expected to be considered by Kent County Council's planning committee in January.

Kent County Council cabinet member for community services, Mike Hill, said: "Libraries have developed to become modern buildings with a wide range of services which customers need."

Duo on murder charges as dad in attack dies

MURDER charges have been brought against two men after the death of a father four months after he was attacked in the garden of his own home.

Paul Hopkins, 32, was attacked in an alleged dispute between neighbours in Beechholme Drive, Kennington, on August 2.

He was taken to a London hospital with serious head injuries and underwent emergency surgery before being transferred to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

There he spent four months in a coma before he died on November 23. Christopher Goldfinch and Scott Stevens, both 22, were charged with the murder when they appeared at Ashford Magistrates' Court on Thursday.

Mr Hopkins was a father of six children aged between one and 12 and had recently married his long-term partner. His children were said to have witnessed the attack.

Goldfinch and Stevens, both from Ashford, were originally charged with grievous bodily harm with intent.

They have been remanded in custody and will appear at Maidstone Crown Court on Monday, December 14. The trial will be held in the new year.

Repeated intercom messages t-annoy high-speed rail user

IRRITATINGLY frequent announcements are blighting passengers' experience of the new high-speed rail service, which launches its full service this Sunday, claims a leading transport commentator.

Christian Wolmar, former transport correspondent for The Independent, has criticised the number of announcements on the new Javelin Hitachi trains, and claimed the journey to Ashford is ruined by the frequent inane messages blaring out of the loudspeakers.

Writing on his website, he said: "The automatic announcements were, quite simply, making it impossible to relax."

"It was okay up to Ebbsfleet but then it got truly crazy. Every couple of minutes or so the announcer would say: 'This is the train to Ashford International. It will stop at Ashford International; the next stop is Ashford International.'"

"This would be bad enough once or twice but it happened six times in the space of 20 minutes."

"Whoever has programmed the computer has not taken into account



REPETITIVE: Passengers were disturbed by frequent messages over the loudspeakers

the fact the message should be changed for the last stop."

At the time Mr Wolmar made his journey, the trains were still officially in their testing stage but operator Southeastern will hope to get any problems sorted out by the introduction of the full service next week.

Six peak high-speed trains will run to St Pancras with two running each hour at off peak times.

London Bridge, Charing Cross, and Victoria will have eight peak-hour trains. Cannon Street will have four and one train will travel to Blackfriars.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Drink driving message will be projected home

THIS year's Christmas drink driving campaign from Kent Highways Services will be projected around the town centre tomorrow.

The core message this year is: 'Is one drink worth the risk?'

A special video projector will be used to beam the message onto surfaces around the town centre. At the same time an anti-drink driving message will be sent by Bluetooth to people's mobile phones in the area.

More details at: www.kentroadsafety.info.

Get the future delivered directly into your inbox

ASHFORD'S Future, the body set up to deliver the town's growth plans, is promoting its new community newsletter so people can learn the latest about what is planned for the town.

The bi-monthly internet newsletter has included news on Waitrose coming to town, plans for SmartLink bus scheme and reaction to the arrival high speed services. To get a copy visit www.ashfordbestplaced.co.uk/news_events/community_newsletter.asp.

Lydd to Jersey - travel couldn't be any simpler

LYDD Airport, also known as London Ashford, has announced that it will be operating regular flights to Jersey next summer.

Fifty-seat Fokker aircraft will fly every Saturday between July 10 and September 11 to the Channel Island.

The planes will be operated by CityJet and booked by the travel company C.I. Travel.

For more information about the airport visit www.lydd-airport.co.uk.

New contractor needed for Tenterden market

A NEW contractor is needed to help run Tenterden Market.

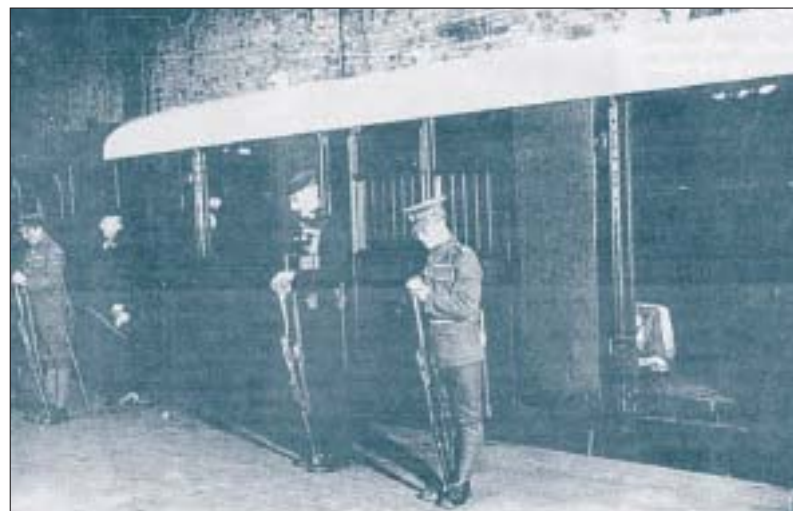
The council wants local businesses to apply for the job of setting up, taking down and storing the market canopies and barriers.

The current contract is set to finish at the end of December and the council says it would like to see a local company take over if possible.

For more information call James Hann on 01233 330721.



Picture: LEWIS J. BROCKWAY



Picture: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

HEROES' TRANSPORT: The first journey was in May 1919 with the body of Edith Cavell (left); the carriage carried the remains of The Unknown Warrior (right), who is buried at Westminster

Historic carriage's journey to repair

■ BY NICK AMES

A STEAM railway has launched an appeal to help restore the carriage which brought home the bodies of three First World War heroes.

The South Eastern and Chatham Railway passenger luggage van No 132 carried the bodies of The Unknown Warrior and nurse Edith Cavell.

It also carried the remains of merchant seaman Captain Charles Fryatt who died trying to destroy a U Boat.

The Kent and East Sussex Railway, which runs from Tenterden to Bodiam, in East Sussex, is hoping to raise £35,000.

The carriage, which was built in 1919, transported the bodies from Dover to London following their arrival from Europe.

"This is a national treasure," said railway general manager Graham Baldwin. "The previous owners were not aware of many of the historical details but when it comes to the history of the First World War it is of colossal importance."

"But it does need quite a lot of work as it is in a pretty bad state."



Picture: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

FINAL JOURNEY: Edith Cavell, who helped allied soldiers escape, and merchant seaman Captain Charles Fryatt

The first journey was made in May 1919 with the body of Edith Cavell who helped Allied soldiers escape from the Germans before she was arrested and then shot on October 12 1915 for "assisting the enemy".

Her final words were: "Standing as I do, in the view of God and eternity I realise that

patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone."

The carriage became known to railway men as the Cavell Van after this journey. Two months after her repatriation, Van 132 carried the remains of merchant seaman Captain Charles Fryatt, whose vessel attempted to ram U-Boat U33 instead of stopping as ordered.

He forced it to submerge but died in a later action.

In November 1920, the carriage conveyed the remains of the war's highest profile casualty, The Unknown Warrior, who is buried in Westminster Abbey as a memorial to the dead of the First World War.

The carriage arrived on the Kent and East Sussex Railway in 2004.

Volunteers aim to have it restored by November 10, 2010, exactly 90 years after it carried The Unknown Warrior to his final resting place.

Apart from mechanical restoration, its interior will be fitted with a catafalque – the decorated wooden framework that supports the coffin – draped with the Union Flag, and educational displays to demonstrate the historic journeys it made.

The van will not run along the tracks but will be a stationary exhibit at one of the lines halts.



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EMPTY SPACES: Dover Place car park is one of the council's sources of income which have suffered this year

Town Hall's £1.1m budget cut, but it doesn't end there

THE council has warned the squeeze on its finances will only get worse in the coming years.

At the recent State of the Borough Debate it revealed how the current recession has affected its budget.

It estimated the loss in its finances could be as much as £1,147,000 this year due to reduced income from sources such as interest rates on capital funds, lower parking rates, fewer planning applications and fewer council housing sales.

Cllr Neil Bell said: "The Government will keep spending during the recession but it is further down the line we really start feeling the pain."

With uncertainties ahead such as the result of the general election, the council has also looked at its medium-term budget where it expects a saving of £2.5 million will have to be found over the next five years in order to balance the books.

Ashford council's deputy chief executive, Paul Naylor, said: "Given the uncertainty in the economy, the upcoming general election and the future prospects for public sector finances, it's a challenging picture."

"Our assumptions reflect the need to ensure we continue to make prudent and

■ BY ED HILL

conservative decisions about our revenue and spending over the next five years.

"Although the planning for next year's budget started this time last year we have identified the need for a further £600,000 savings for the 2010/11 budget and we are working hard to develop the detailed plans that will deliver this before our budget plans are finalised next February."

"Protecting essential front-line services will continue to be a priority for the council and we will be working hard over the next few months to develop a strategy that will minimise any impact on the services we provide for residents."

Cllr Paul Bartlett, deputy leader and portfolio holder for resource management and control, said: "In uncertain economic times, with less funding support and a new government expected next May, this report shows our financial position is under control and the council is in a good position."

"Our budget gap is considerably smaller than some of our neighbouring authorities, so I remain confident in our ability to deliver a balanced budget next year and in the years to come."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Rural homes explosion

THE rural parts of the borough are likely to see an additional 1,500 new homes built between 2001 and 2021.

The council wants members of the public to take a look at the most recent draft of its development document for areas including Tenterden, Bethersden, Wye and Charing.

Changes have been made to the first document published in June as a result of the feedback from a six-week public consultation.

Simon Cole, policy planning manager for Ashford council, said: "The council has responded to some of the feedback received on the initial draft plan and have, where possible, listened to local views and made changes, in particular at the sites in Bethersden and Tenterden."

Copies of the plan are available at the Civic Centre, Tenterden Gateway and the local libraries at Charing and Wye, as well as on-line at www.ashford.gov.uk/consult or call 01233 330213.

The closing date for the council to receive comments is Friday, January 8, 2010 at 5pm.

Haulier branches out for UN

A HAULAGE firm based in Appledore has transported trees for a special art exhibition linked to the UN conference on climate change.

CPL Transport Services specialises in transporting abnormal loads. It was given the contract to transport ten 15ft trees from the Suhama forest in Ghana to Trafalgar Square.

They will form part of the exhibition called Ghost Forest. The company used five lorries to take the from the docks at Hull to London.

The artwork is being used to highlight the problem of deforestation at the same time as world leaders meet in Copenhagen to discuss the problems of climate change.

Carol singing for homeless

CHILDREN from Spring Grove Primary School in Wye helped to raise money for the homeless in front of busy shoppers at the Designer Outlet on Friday.

The entertained the crowd with seasonal favourites. Monies raised will go to the charity Porchlight which runs a hostel in Ashford.

The children also decorated a tree with woollen hats and scarves and asked for people to and retailers to donate the cloths if they could.

Headteacher Bill Jones said: "We had a successful day and the children sung well. We wanted to collect scarves and hats too because they could be used straight away."

Santa has arrived...

Santa will be in his grotto every Saturday in December and every day from Monday 21st of December until Christmas Eve

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The Heartbeat of Ashford

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Regeneration hits 300 homes mark

THE £150 million regeneration of Stanhope has reached another milestone.

The 300th council home has now been refurbished by the construction company Denne; part of the Chrysalis consortium behind the rebuilding programme.

The home, occupied by Annalize and Barry Kersley, was fitted with a new kitchen, bathroom and boiler.

Work on the remaining 23 homes will be completed by the end of the year.

Colin Swain, refurbishment manager at Denne, said: "We realise that the work can be disruptive for the residents, which



is why we are focused on completing the repairs well within the allocated number of days."

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Father's grief becomes a cry from the heart

■ BY MARIJKE COX

A GRIEVING father has written a book about coping with the death of his teenage son and the tragic suicide of his ex-wife who could not face life without her boy.

In his book, *Losing James – A Father Cries Too*, Michael Bollom gives a candid account of how he dealt with the double tragedy that tore his world apart.

The 50-year-old, from Bearsted, near Maidstone, recalled the moment on December 4, 2005, that he found out his 16-year-old son James was dead.

"I felt a complete numbness," he said. "My life fell apart. I didn't really know what was going on for those first few months."

James was killed in a car crash in Watlington, near Maidstone, a month short of his 17th birthday. He had been a passenger in a speeding car that went out of control and hit an oncoming vehicle.

Mr Bollom, a director of a manufacturing company in Sittingbourne, said: "James died instantly. His side of the car took the full impact of the crash. Losing someone through the fault of somebody else feels even worse."

"The driver was done for dangerous driving and was sentenced to two years and three months in prison, but some of that was spent on probation. The penalty didn't seem to take into account that a life was lost."

But things got worse for Mr Bollom when, just three months after the fatal crash that killed his son, his ex-wife Samantha took her own life.

"She couldn't cope with life without James," he said. "They had a very good relationship; they were best friends. She just couldn't go on without him."

James shared his time between his parents, but spent the majority with his mother.

Mr Bollom said: "Samantha and I had a good relationship. When she died it was like reliving the whole experience of James's death again."

Asked whether he had considered suicide himself, Mr Bollom said: "When you lose a child, of course you think, 'What's the point?' But I was fortunate to have a strong network around me, including my wife of ten years. But Samantha felt she couldn't carry on."

In his book, Mr Bollom talks about how he sought solace in the spiritual realm through a medium. He admitted that prior to the



HAPPIER TIMES: Teenager James was the best man at his father's Michael Bollom's wedding



LONE BURDEN: Mr Bollom on James's memorial bench

tragedy he was sceptical about spiritual life, but now believes he would not have got through his grief without it.

"It was able to show me that no matter what, James is always there," he said.

"There were things the medium knew that were so accurate, things only James and I would know. I talk about this in the book, but only as my opinion. I don't want to preach to people about how to deal with their grief."

A main factor in Mr Bollom's book is that it deals with the grief of a father.

"It is rare for a book like this to be written by a man," he said.

"Most are written from a female perspective, but I think it's very important to see that fathers suffer too."

"They have to carry on and be strong for others and in a way they have a harder job because they are trying to deal with their grief while carrying on as normal. It's hard to see a mother grieving for a lost child, but at times fathers are somewhat forgotten when their grief is just as bad."

"No parent should have to bury a child."

Money raised from sales of the book – which took 15 months to write – is going to a charity to help people dealing with bereavement. Mr Bollom said he was looking into which charity to choose.

He added: "I miss James, we were close. He was best man at my wedding. He was always smiling and liked by everyone. There were 450 people at his funeral, all of different ages."

"Writing this book has helped me cope with his death. I hope it will help others who have lost someone close."

• *Losing James – A Father Cries Too*, is available at £799 by contacting Michael Oke at Bound Biographies on 01869 232911. Alternatively, email mike@boundbiographies.com.

Stargazers aim to reclaim the night

DARKNESS at night is one of the things that defines the countryside, but that is rapidly declining and with it our views of the stars and planets.

For eight years Anton Vamplew worked at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich. He now runs Planetarium Earth, a company dedicated to space and astronomy, from his home in Langton Green, near Tunbridge Wells.

He said: "Responsible councils are getting better with their policies for preventing light pollution, but we have a long way to go."

"Security lighting is a concern. I understand the need, but with a little effort the searchlights on private property, public buildings and business premises can be scaled down and reflected not to embrace the sky. It is a matter of education."

"Campaigning has made a difference in some areas, but towns and cities will never get the views of the skies at night back."

Trevor Cannon, of the Mid Kent Astronomical Society, is among those campaigning for the return of dark skies.

Deterioration

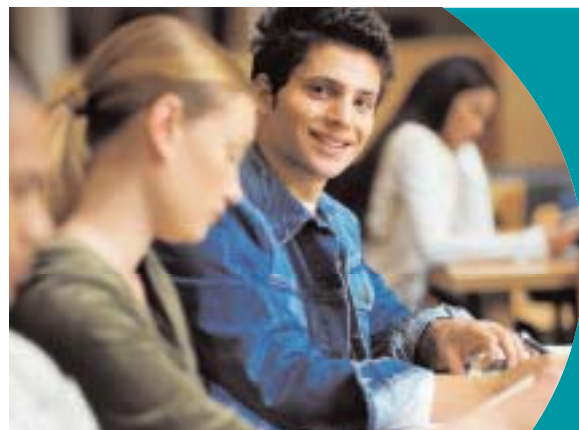
He said: "Over 30 years' study I have seen a big difference in the clarity of the sky at night. There has been a dramatic deterioration. We have to curb both light and air pollution. There is law, but no-one seems to be imposing it."

Already the heart of the Milky Way is blotted out for more than half the UK population and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has data from satellites showing the light pollution is spreading.

Michael Smith, professor of astronomy at the University of Kent, said: "More than 300 megawatts of power is wasted skywards from UK street lights and the annual cost is £100 million."

It seems that many are still unaware that intrusive lighting is, since 2006, by law a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act. Exterior light emitted from premises that is prejudicial to health or a nuisance is a criminal offence. The CPRE campaign would like to see it used to raise awareness with discussion and mediation in the first place rather than court action.

They also point out that the law clearly cites lights from premises so street lighting is ruled out, but they urge people to report other bad examples that are causing damage to environmental health officers.



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QUESTION & ANSWER

BRIAN MARSH



Q How long has Shopmobility been operating in Ashford?

A Since 2002, but County Square is the first permanent premises we have had. Up until now we have been based in temporary buildings around the town.

When we moved here they wanted a manager to be here all the time, so the service was more reliable.

We offer electric scooters and wheelchairs for hire so that people with mobility problems can do their shopping. People normally hire them out by the hour, although there are some which are hired out for longer.

The service is very popular; for many of our customers it is the only way they can get around town.

Q What's Ashford like as a town for disabled access?

A I am on the committee of Ashford Access so I go round the town and point out a few things that I think can be improved. Most of the major shops are fine but at some of the older places it is not possible to adapt them. On the whole it is very good.

Q Has the shared space scheme helped?

A Now it has settled down it is OK. There have not been any disasters. Ashford Access was involved with that scheme. I think the only problem is a lot of the drivers seem

totally oblivious to the 20mph speed limit and there are minor things that need to be altered, particularly for people with sight problems.

Q How is the Shopmobility doing at the moment?

A Unfortunately, we have no guaranteed funding for next year. Ashford council is looking into the possibility of giving us some money, but we still have to look for other sources of funding. We should be OK for the next few months, but after that we may have to close down. As a local service we do not want to be in that position, but it is difficult; we still have to pay business rates and overheads and maintain the equipment.

The money we get from hiring the buggies is not enough to support us. There are a lot of funds that you can apply for to start up a project, but very little to keep things going.

A lot of people back what we do, but we don't have a celebrity face to raise the profile or someone who can actually get us more money. We want to promote the service so we can generate more income.

We would welcome any donations.

Q What do you think of Ashford?

A I have lived here all my life. I think often things get pulled down and then people live to regret it. There seems to be an obsession with building office space, but whether it

can be filled is another thing and we need something like an arts centre.

Q You have a signed picture of Toyah Willcox in the shop. How did you get that?

A I took that picture of her when she was in Ashford. I have seen her live a few times. I take photos of local bands and some more well known acts if I can. When I was made redundant I bought a good camera and now I go to all sorts of concerts to take photos.

For example, I took some pictures of the Searchers, which the bass player Frank Allen used in his autobiography. I also took some pictures of Kajagoogoo recently which came out well and I have taken shots at events like Create.

Q How is the Ashford music scene?

A I think Ashford is pretty good but we are running out of venues that put on more adventurous kinds of music. We need more small venues with a decent sound system decent lights and a decent stage.

I do play guitar myself and I like all sorts of music ranging from early Elvis, right through the Beatles and the Stones and The Who to Hendrix Bowie and Bolan, and even people like Patti Smith. People my age are supposed to just like bands like Dire Straits but I like anything that has something different about it.

The manager of Shopmobility in County Square, Ashford, talks to **Ed Hill** about the future of the mobility scheme and his quest for funding, his passion for photography and his wide-ranging tastes in music

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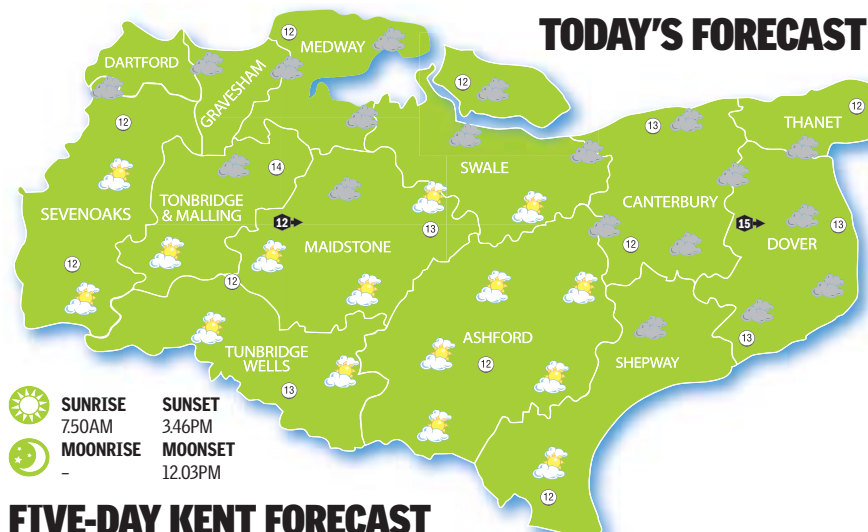
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	Sunday	9:54am	5.4m
Dover	Saturday	7:19am	6.0m
	Sunday	8:19am	6.0m
Dungeness	Saturday	7:13am	6.7m
	Sunday	8:12am	6.9m
Ramsgate	Saturday	7:49am	4.5m
	Sunday	8:49am	4.6m
Sheerness	Saturday	8:37am	5.2m
	Sunday	9:42am	5.2m
Whitstable	Saturday	8:44am	4.8m
	Sunday	9:51am	4.9m



AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	7°C	Madrid	10°C
Athens	15°C	New York	3°C
Barcelona	17°C	Paris	8°C
Beijing	1°C	Rome	13°C
Bombay	30°C	Sydney	32°C
Cape Town	21°C	Tenerife	22°C
Cardiff	9°C	Tokyo	13°C
Gibraltar	17°C	Vancouver	4°C
Hong Kong	18°C	Warsaw	6°C
Las Palmas	21°C	Wellington	17°C

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon		Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	11°C	13°C	10°C	9°C	8°C	Gravesend	11°C	13°C	10°C	9°C	8°C
Canterbury	10°C	12°C	10°C	9°C	8°C	Maidstone	10°C	14°C	10°C	8°C	8°C
Chatham	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C	Ramsgate	10°C	12°C	10°C	9°C	8°C
Dartford	11°C	13°C	10°C	9°C	8°C	Rochester	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C
Dover	10°C	13°C	11°C	9°C	8°C	Sevenoaks	9°C	12°C	9°C	7°C	7°C
Faversham	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C	Sittingbourne	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C
Folkestone	10°C	13°C	11°C	9°C	8°C	Tonbridge	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C
Gillingham	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C	Tun Wells	10°C	13°C	10°C	8°C	8°C

yourashford

NEWS IN BRIEF

You can bank on a great night of wine and art

THE Art Room in Bank Street will be holding a special late night exhibition on Thursday.

Visitors can enjoy a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie while viewing work from local artists including: John Harvey, Graham Clarke, Dawn Cole, Vikky Furse and Brenda Hartill.

Renowned seascape artist Mary Shaw will also be displaying her work at the gallery for the next week.

The event will run from 6pm until 8pm.

To find out more call 01233 665845.

Are you looking for a way into the property market?

AN open day is being held at Stanhope for people to look at some of the new homes available.

The event on Saturday, December 12 will be held at the new clocktower built as part of the regeneration project.

Homes are available on a part-buy part-rent scheme backed by the Government and run by the Moat housing association.

Mike and Denise Gulliver bought a house using the scheme earlier this year. They were living in a three bedroom apartment in Headcorn when they heard about the scheme from the council. They purchased 25 per cent of a £90,000 two bedroom apartment. To book an appointment at the open day, contact Moat's sales and marketing team on 0845 359 6161 or visit www.moat.co.uk.

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Afghanistan: a soldier's tale

How a Kent TV journalist brought an Army Captain's memoirs to life

■ BY NICK AMES

TWO of the most highly regarded books to come out of the conflict in Afghanistan recount the experiences of Captain Doug Beattie of the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles.

The Military Cross holder first put together an account of a ferocious battle against the Taliban to retake the town of Garmsir called *An Ordinary Soldier*.

The News of the World called it "exhilarating, bloody, moving and terrifying" while The Sunday Times said it was "a riveting read".

The follow up "Task Force Helmand" describes Capt Beattie's return to the warzone in the role of mentoring and training members of the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army.

But for a chance encounter in 2006 underneath a camouflage net while waiting for a Hercules transport aircraft out of the British base Camp Bastion and the prompting of Capt Beattie's wife Margaret, neither book would have seen the light of day.

The man with the task of turning the Northern Irish officer's notes and memories into bestseller material was Philip Gomm who met him while waiting to return to the UK after working as a cameraman in the combat zone.

Mr Gomm, a former reporter with Meridian TV, who lives just outside Ashford, said: "I'd been filming for the ITV regions which include Meridian and I was on my way home.

"I was waiting for a flight while sitting next to a chap with a battered and bruised face. It looked as though he had been involved in something very serious.

"We got talking and it turned out he'd fought a battle to retake Garmsir which should have lasted two days but he was actually there for two weeks. Like all Irishmen he told a good story.



ORDINARY SOLDIERS?: An image from Captain Doug Beattie's new book, showing soldiers capturing a Taliban suspect and, right, journalist Philip Gomm reporting from Westminster

"And it wasn't just about Afghanistan. Doug had guarded ex Nazi leader Rudolph Hess in Spandau Prison and been a Regimental Sergeant Major under Iraq hero Tim Collins.

"I said to him that during my 40 years of life I'd wanted to write a book but it had never happened as I'd never found the right subject. "Then I said that today looking at you I've found someone who I know people will find interesting – because I certainly do."

The pair exchanged contact details and Mr Gomm thought that well could be the end of any contact.

But six months later he got an email from Capt Beattie.

"It turned out that when he got home, back to Northern Ireland, Doug found he could not talk about his experiences to his wife – but he started to write them down so she could read them," said Mr Gomm.

"It was she who suggested he contacted the person who had said he was interested in writing a book so I got a whole load of documents and notes to look at.

"Doug is so candid, honest and emotional he is a dream for a writer. You don't have to prise things out. He didn't mind admitting he had cried and had nightmares about what he had seen and done.

"In a broader way it was beneficial and cathartic for him to get things out. Other soldiers returning from combat don't have that outlet and can bottle up things. Five or ten years later that can cause real problems."

Three agents expressed interest in the book as did five publishers and it ended up selling – to date – around 60,000 copies.

Capt Beattie was all set to leave the Army but then received a phone call.

"This was in 2008 and his commanding officer asked him to train some of the younger recruits and work with Afghan police and soldiers," said Mr Gomm.

His experiences have just been published in a second book, in collaboration with Mr Gomm.

It recounts 50 major engagements with the Taliban and horrific incidents such as the death of a child by a British mortar shell and how Afghan soldiers – working alongside UK forces – murdered a Taliban prisoner.

It also recounts Afghan soldiers displaying the body parts of a suicide bomber as a warning to other insurgents.

Mr Gomm said: "I feel that Doug got harder on his second tour. The first time he took a life – in 2006 – it affected him deeply but he got hardened to it."

Capt Beattie is now retired from the Army but is still active in the Territorials and the British Legion in his home town of Portadown.

He said: "I wrote what I wrote honestly from a soldiers' point of view and Phil – who has never served in the military – did a brilliant job of turning it into a language people could understand."

An Ordinary Soldier and Task Force Helmand are available through Simon and Schuster publishers, priced £17.99.

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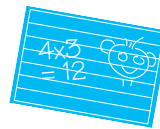
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BREAK TIME

Maths achievement adds up for Edwina

A STUDENT at Ashford School has got one of the highest marks in the country in a maths competition.

Edwina Luo scored the second highest mark of 121 out of 125, putting her in the top 20 candidates in the country out of 65,000 who entered.

The competition was organized by the United Kingdom Maths Trust.

Edwina was one of 91 students at the school, who took part in the competition.

Fifty-eight received Gold, Silver or Bronze certificates, which meant a score of 64 percent compared to a national average of 40 per cent.

Nine students will now go on to take part in the first round of the British Mathematical Olympiad this month.

Maths teacher Dr Sue Childs said: "No one at Ashford School has ever achieved such a brilliant mark before."



2ND: Edwina Luo

Youth team talks its way to next round

A YOUTH Speaks competition organised by the Rotary Club was recently held at Homewood School in Tenterden.

The overall winners were Sutton Valance School, near Maidstone, who gave a talk about nuclear energy.

The team will now go forward to compete in the Kent-wide event and, possibly, the national finals at the Albert Hall.

College pioneers system to test functional skills

■ BY ED HILL

SOUTH Kent College is leading the way in introducing new government exam procedures.

From September 2010 the 'key skills' subjects – maths, English and information technology – will now be referred to as 'functional skills' subjects. This means the way they are assessed will change; instead of being monitored as students progress through their courses, they will have to pass exams on set dates.

Alison Coley, the exams manager at the college, is the author of new guidelines that will be circulated to staff in schools and colleges across the country.

They are part of what is called the Functional Skills Toolkit distributed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.

Mrs Coley said: "You do have to have an in-depth knowledge because you can't take a chance and hope for the best. You have to get it right. You have to understand the qualifications that you're administering."

Functional skills are described as essential elements to equip students for work and life and the

new system has proved to be a particular challenge for colleges. Mrs Coley's guidelines will help to insure that students are entered for their exams on time.

The college was chosen to pilot the introduction of the new system and now after the third year is feeding its experiences through to national policy.

Mrs Coley is based at the Ashford campus and has worked for the college for 25 years.

She said: "What I have written is an aide to teaching staff to help them complete the exams entry forms. They are more complicated now because of the number of components and elements that make up the qualification. Lots of the terminology will be new to them."

South Kent College principal Monica Box said: "This shows how our business support staff can, and do, lead the way in developing systems and procedures that support effective administration of learning."

"It's yet another example of how we value learners by making sure they receive the awards and qualifications they study as quickly and efficiently as possible."

"I would say we are one of the most efficient colleges nationally in this regard."



QUALIFIED: College exams manager Alison Coley is the author of the new guidelines

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yourashfordblogger

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Are new NHS treatment cash cards the healthy choice for us?

WHEN I go to the shop to buy breakfast cereal, I want a choice.

Currently I'm going for the healthy option and buying Shredded Wheat, but next week, who knows?

I might decide to start my day with sugar-coated toasted confectionery, or purchase a box of those brightly coloured things with marshmallow bits that make it difficult to concentrate if you eat too many of them.

Actually, they may have been banned now... the point is, I have a choice, and that's just great. Choice is a popular thing; it allows us to assert our individuality through the medium of humorous ring tones, for example.

In fact, having a choice, a say in who runs our country, is what our great democracy is built on.

But is it always good to have a choice? Kent has been picked, along with some other counties, to pilot an NHS scheme which could take choice too far.

The plan is to issue patients a cash card, loaded with x thousand pounds they can

spend on health services of their choosing.

The pilot is being run with pregnant women, who will be asked to pick what they want to spend their birth-budget on, instead of those meddling, fully-qualified, experienced professionals doing it for them. Fantastic!

But do pregnant women really need to feel in control of their own health budget? I would assume they already have quite a lot to think about, let alone taking on a temporary unpaid job as an NHS finance manager.

Not being pregnant, or indeed, a woman, I don't know. But what I do know is that if I am ill, particularly if it is something serious, I just want to go somewhere and be cured.

I don't want to choose my own treatment. I want a doctor to do that, because he is rather more likely to know what he's doing.

Yet if the pilot is deemed a success, then the cash cards could be rolled out for other groups – cancer patients, the elderly, the terminally ill.

Professional medical staff have already lined up against the plan, with both the Royal College of Midwives and the King's Trust

arguing that similar schemes in Europe have led to misspent money which does nothing to improve patients' health.

Some groups, the young, the old, the mentally ill, may not be in the best position to correctly judge what treatment they need.

And aside from the practical issues, there are serious moral questions here too.

Who is ultimately responsible if the patient makes the wrong choice? The type one diabetes sufferer who decides to trust in homeopathic charlatans instead of taking insulin injections? Is it their fault their condition deteriorates?

Sometimes choice is not what we need. Breakfast cereal? Yes. Elected representatives? Yes. Ringtones? If you really must.

But when we are ill we just need to be confident we are getting the best care possible, wherever we go, without the added stress of balancing a budget.

EDITOR'S NOTE: All blogs are supplied with full name and address of the authors. They do not reflect the view of the newspaper but are designed to give our readers the chance to air their views.

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Write to The Editor, YourAshford, KoS Media, Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR.

* We cannot guarantee all articles will be published and all are at the editor's discretion

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The closing date for entries is December 16th, 2009.

Question: Name a top note that makes up this fantastic scent?

No purchase necessary. For our full terms and conditions visit www.kentnews.co.uk, or call 01303 817073. If you do not wish to receive any literature please write 'no literature' on your entry.

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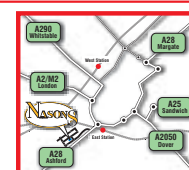


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TALK TIME

DANIEL PENFOLD

The Orbital Park Christmas tree seller talks about his year-round business and why nothing beats a real tree



How long have you been selling Christmas Trees in Ashford?

We have been here about 25 years. We grow and sell our own trees. We live in Biddenden and have about 150 acres of land which we grow them on.

We also supply some trees wholesale. People know us well and know they will always get a premium tree from us at a reasonable price.

People think we are only busy at this time of year but we have had to tend and care for these trees over the whole year. We have to prune them to get a good shape and fertilise them and manage the stock.

We know exactly what we are selling and can give people the best advice. They are also fresh. We will cut them from the ground as we need them. We say our trees are better than some of the imported ones that you might get at a garden centre.

We have sites in Sittingbourne and near Tonbridge where we sell them from.

It's also the event of buying a tree. We have seen customers' children grow up all the years we have been here.

What sort of trees are people buying? Why do they like a real tree so much?

You can't beat a real tree. It's not just the look but also the smell. If you buy a plastic one you are stuck with it year after year.

We have different varieties such as the Nordman non drop and Blue Spruce and a new American variety which is popular, as well as the traditional Norwegian type which more people tend to have outside these days.

YOUR LETTERS

Does no one care about our safety?

I would like to ask once again for the police and the council to look at the lorry parking situation alongside Ashford Cattle Market.

Every space between double yellow lines will be filled with articulated lorries from Europe on a Sunday... and most Saturdays too.

While the council has addressed this problem, and I have even spotted traffic wardens along there, issuing tickets, this problem is not going away.

This, along with the poor drainage along the road, made it a genuine danger to the public during last week's heavy rains.

Does no one care? Why do law-abiding folk pay taxes and road tax when we are so poorly treated on our own doorstep?

South Willlesborough resident.
Name and address withheld.

It's time to stop Operation Stack

I write this after a whole winter week without Operation Stack being introduced. That in itself must be worthy of reporting.

So, I'd like to take this time to ask our councillors and politicians: When will we make proper provision for lorries forced to queue to cross the Channel?

I live in Ashford and work in Folkestone and live under the constant cloud that a tantrum strike by French dockers or a



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spot of bad weather that disrupts our busy ferry service will leave me with another half hour journey to get to work.

I pay my road tax and I expect to be able to commute freely to work, yet foreign trucks get

preferential treatment whenever things get a little tough crossing to France.

Come on KCC, take the lead and seek an end to this problem, now.

Charles Henderson, Ashford

State of interest needs encouraging

I'm glad the State of the Borough Debate has been rejuvenated. Last year it did not work but the council made the right decision to reinvent it instead of simply cancelling it altogether.

There is precious little public interest in politics so anything that encourages this should be retained wherever possible.

Mark Daniels
Ashford

Debate shows need to improve culture

Finally the council might sit up and take notice that the district needs more provision for arts and culture. The fact it "dominated" the State of the Borough Debate cannot have escaped anyone's attention, and not a moment too soon.

We have waited long enough, and lots of good ideas have already been mooted.

It's now time for the council to grab this particular bull by the horns and act on the desires of the people who elected it!

Eileen Phillips
Ashford

Keep them all out, especially the kids

While feeling sympathy for refugees in Calais, I do not see why we as a nation should be an open door for anyone who wants to live here.



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How long will we have to pay people on benefits before they can find work? Some never find work. What is this doing to our housing problems, and our National Health Service, which has more and more money every year poured into it to cope with people who come here?

Unaccompanied children should not be allowed into the country, they would be better off in their own country with their families to care for them.

Anything may happen to them, if they were trafficked in to Britain the odds are they will be taken by unscrupulous people to be used as slave labour or worse.

We are doing these children no favours by allowing them in alone or with an adult who has not been checked out to meet them and take them away to what?

Why do we not help with accommodation, infrastructure, schools etc in countries over the first safe border?

This would help everyone. To come to the other side of the world means we are giving too much and it will be a life of Riley here for these people who will be fed, housed and enjoy health care – for someone who may never work a day.

They should be refused unless they can show they will be able to work and care for themselves.

Pat Moore, comment posted on
www.yourashford.co.uk

Britain's not deliberately letting the refugees in

If we were an 'open door', wouldn't these people simply be able to get the train or ferry like everyone else? Think about it.

We don't have an open door. People get here in secret, despite the millions spent policing the crossing.

Bob, comment posted on
www.yourashford.co.uk

It's a compliment that they want to come here

I would like to take the opportunity to reply to some of the comments made about Kent Refugee Help's support for refugees living in Calais.

Without going into the complexities of EU immigration and refugee policy that have pushed the borders of Europe further and further out (even beyond the borders of the EU) I'd just like to point out how hard it can be to claim asylum in many countries of Europe even if people want to.

The question of why refugees seem to want to come to them is a complex one but is certainly connected to our reputation in the world – as a major economic and political power as well as being a country where it is possible for some migrants to work hard and achieve a better life.

The English language is clearly another draw and many refugees don't plan to stay forever. It is also significant that we are engaged in conflicts in some of the countries refugees come from. In my view we not only have a responsibility to many of the migrants at our borders but that we

should take pride that the UK is still seen as a place where people from across the world can find a welcome and contribute to our society.

Refugees and other migrants are often presented as being a burden on our society – the reality is quite different; their energy and drive contributes vastly to our economy and as most migrants are young and healthy they do not need or use the health service to any great extent.

No asylum seeker is allowed to work however and the government supports them at a rate well below income support – this means refugees in the process of applying to stay are prevented from working and are forced to wait around until their case is concluded – something that may take years. This is clearly a huge waste of resources for everyone.

The Editor's piece also includes some factual inaccuracies about KRH – we have not received any money from the UN to support our work in Calais and what we have done has been alongside other groups and individuals who are concerned for the welfare of a destitute group of people. The second inaccuracy I have to challenge is the frankly bizarre suggestion that we are drumming up business for ourselves!

You write "That would mean all those organisations, which rely on refugees for their work, might just be unnecessary" – implying that supporting refugees is making us a good living. KRH, like so many organisations supporting disadvantaged groups, is very small, and most of us work unpaid. We have two part-time workers, earning the kind of hourly rate most journalists wouldn't get out of bed for. We raise our funds from private donations and from charitable trusts. More importantly we, like most charity groups, are working to put ourselves out of business – and no-one will be happier than us when Dover Immigration Removal Centre is closed.

To conclude, it is a pleasure to have this chance to tell people a bit more about ourselves and to have some sensible discussion about migration to Europe. Kent Refugee Help, like other local organisations such as Dover Detainee Support Group and Kent Refugee Action Network, are keen that people understand the reality of what it is to be a refugee and we try our best to support the most vulnerable in our society – those who are marginalised, criminalised and without rights and entitlements.

Lucy Williams chair of Kent Refugee Help

Show how much you care by giving them a break

Most of us are looking forward to taking time off work and relaxing this festive season, but for the hundreds of thousands of carers in the south east, Christmas will be hard, unrelenting work, just as it has been all year long.

Carers provide round the clock care for their loved ones, often without a break, with very little support and hardly any recognition. Many carers become disabled themselves, as a result of the stress.

I would like to ask your readers to spare a thought for the invisible army of carers in the region. I work at a respite holiday centre for disabled people and carers called Vitalise Jubilee Lodge in Chigwell, run by the charity Vitalise. The guests and carers who take desperately-needed respite breaks here always take the time to tell me just how important a break is in their lives. Just one week a year can make the difference between coping and despair.

To make a donation or for information about our breaks, call 020 8501 2331 or visit www.vitalise.org.uk.

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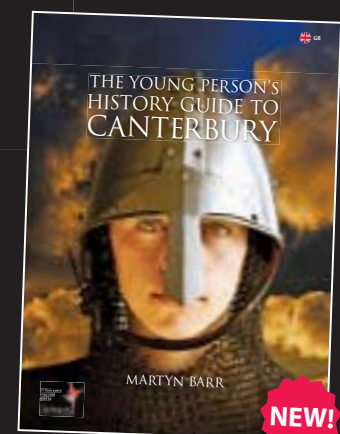
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Ray's hooked on panto role

Home and Away actor to leave sunny Summer Bay to play the villainous pirate in classic pantomime tale

PETER PAN



Saturday, December 12 to Sunday, January 3
Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells

AUDIENCES will be hooked on the Assembly Hall's pantomime when Peter Pan opens this weekend.

The villain of the piece has travelled from the other side of the world to take part in the show, which promises to be an extravaganza of festive family fun.

Ray Meagher is best known for playing amiable Alf Stewart in Australian soap opera, Home and Away, but this Christmas he is donning the wig, coat and scary prop to play the wicked Captain Hook.

Having played Alf since the soap's very first episode in 1988, Meagher has appeared in the Guinness World Records as the longest-serving actor in a serial. His character has owned a liquor store, boat hire service, caravan park and yacht brokerage, while standing by his wife Ailsa as she suffered from depression.

Meagher began his career as a television actor before landing a number of film roles in films such as Breaker Morant, Newsfront and My Brilliant Career. His role as the villainous Captain Hook will be a far cry from all the drama of life in Summer Bay, as he enters the magical world of Neverland.

His hapless sidekick Smee will be played by Christopher Pizzey, who will be familiar to television viewers as Mr Stephen from the Basil Brush Show. He appeared as a main character in four series of the hugely popular children's programme and is currently starring in the new Planet Ajay on CBBC.

Jessica Punch plays Peter Pan, with Lucy Johnson as the charismatic fairy Tinkerbell. The role of Mrs Darling is played by Sarah Jane Buckley, who appeared as Cathy Barnes in the teen drama, Hollyoaks.

The Nitwits will be adding some acrobatic flourish to the Pirate Crew, adding yet more excitement to a pan-



tomime that promises plenty of swashbuckling, laughter and magic.

Since Peter Pan's first appearance in the 1900s, JM Barrie's creation has enchanted readers of all ages and generated a number of films, plays and pantomimes. The magical tale of the boy who never grew up remains a perennial favourite and

audiences will find themselves caught up in the Assembly Hall's captivating Neverland.

Ticket prices start at £12.50, with concessions and group rates available.

To book call the box office on 01892 530613/532072 or go to www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk.

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TRULY MAGICAL CHRISTMAS

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MEET Father Christmas in the falling snow as the Rare Breeds Centre gets the festivities started.

A truly magical experience is in store when visitors step into Santa's enchanted grotto to meet the man in red and his little helpers.

Children will be entertained with stories and songs, as well as chatting to Father Christmas and receiving an exciting present.

A one-man pantomime is on hand to keep the entertainment going, giving people the

chance to join in the hilarious fun. Anyone who would like to write to Father Christmas should bring their letter with them, as Santa's post box has been hidden in a starlit labyrinth.

The Truly Magical Christmas runs this Saturday and Sunday and again from next Friday to Wednesday, December 23. There is also a Christmas gift and craft fair taking place this weekend.

Admission costs £8 for adults, £10 for children and £5 for under-fives, group rates are available.

Booking is essential so call 01233 861493, extension 221, to secure your place. Find out more at www.rarebreeds.org.uk.

COMEDY CLUB

Thursday, December 10
Ashford International Hotel, Ashford

BANISH the winter blues with an evening of comedy from two great entertainers.

The Comedy Club returns to Ashford to present a laugh-a-minute show featuring John Ryan and Wayne Deakin.

As a former Edinburgh Highlight Award winner and victor of The Weakest Link's comedian special, Ryan, pictured, has shown his ability to win over diverse audiences.

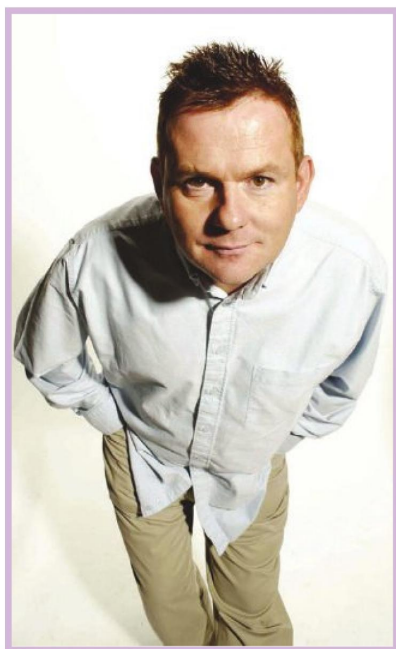
Laconic Australian comedian Wayne Deakin headlines the evening, demonstrating why he was the only comedian selected to tour the UN bases to entertain Australian and UN troops.

With his likeable style and biting social commentary, Deakin prompts plenty of laughs while also leaving audiences with something to think about.

His career highlights to date include performing at the Montreal Comedy Festival and Laff Trax in Las Vegas.

Tickets cost £45 including a three-course meal, disco and a half-bottle of wine. The over-18s show starts at 9pm.

To book tickets call 01233 219988 or visit www.hahaheehes.com.



SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

Running until Sunday, January 10
Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone

AN EastEnders faces up to a Gladiator in the family pantomime Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

Prince Charming will be played by EastEnders star Aaron Sidwell, who plays troubled Stephen Beale in the soap opera. Born and raised in Maidstone, Sidwell will be looking forward to charming his home crowd with his turn as the dashing hero.

When a jealous queen orders her stepdaughter's death, Snow White manages to escape and find safety with a group of new friends. But her wicked stepmother discovers the ruse and sets out to finish the job.

Holly Matthews plays Snow White, which will be a far cry from her roles in



Waterloo Road, The Bill and Doctors. Audiences can enjoy some great musical numbers from Pop Idol finalist Tina Perry, who plays the Wicked Queen, while Wayne Gordon – also known as Doom from Gladiators – plays her henchman.

Comedian Tom Swift returns to play Muddles the Jester and Jimmy Burton-les from the Basil Brush Show also stars.

Book tickets online at www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk or call the box office on 01622 758611.

ASHFORD LEISURE

Lovedays concert gives village sporting chance

SPEND an evening in the company of The Lovedays in Smarden next week.

The alternative rock group will be at the Smarden Charter Hall on Friday, December 18 and the audience will also be able to pop to Martin Wilson's Disco.

The concert is in aid of Smarden Sports Association. Tickets, at £7.50, are available from Smarden Post Office or call 01233 770628. For details go to www.myspace.com/benjonesandthelovedays.

Try Cold Shots for rock with a boogie element

INDIE and rock fans can enjoy live music in Ashford on Saturday.

Cold Shots plays cover versions of rock hits from the likes of Jet, Feeder, Oasis, Kings of Leon and many more. The band also has a boogie element. Find out more at www.myspace.com/coldshotsrock.

Cold Shots will be at the George Hotel in High Street. For more information about the venue call 01233 625512.

J Bone promises great night of acoustic music

FOR an evening of live acoustic music, head down to Willesborough.

Bill 'J Bone' Douglas is an acoustic solo artist who will be performing at the Windmill Inn in Hythe Road from 8.30pm on Saturday. Admission is free.

For more information about the venue call the pub on 01233 647349.

Get creative and win chance to stage event

ASPIRING nightlife promoters have just a few days left to apply for the Smirnoff Creative Grants scheme.

Last year Duncan King from Maidstone organised the Tunnel Vision night at a fort in Chatham with a bursary from the scheme, which aims to encourage unforgettable nights out.

Four lucky entrants will win £5,000 each to stage their innovative event.

Enter at www.facebook.com/SmirnoffGB by Friday.

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yourashfordmusic

Chas plays Tap's rockney knees-up with His Band

BY SIMON ROBINSON

A COCKNEY Christmas treat will be served up in Chatham next week when Chas & His Band perform.

The trio will take to the stage at the Tap 'n' Tin for their now annual festive appearance at the venue.

It will be the first time pianist and singer Chas Hodges has played the Railway Street pub/club since bandmate Dave Peacock retired, but the legendary Londoner continues to perform the duo's most famous hits.

Fans can expect to hear classic C&D songs such as Rabbit, Ain't No Pleasin' You, Gertcha, Snooker Loopy and Margate.

The band – featuring Chas's son Nick on drums – will also perform a full Jerry Lee Lewis tribute, giving Chas the opportunity to rattle out some tales of his time on the road with the rock 'n' roll pioneer.

Chas will also be taking questions from the crowd throughout the evening.

Support on the night comes from Trouser Trumpets and Tyrannosaurus Alan.

The last two Chas & Dave Christmas gigs have featured former Libertines rocker Pete Doherty on the undercard, but there is to be no hat trick of appearances.

Videos of both Pete's and Chas & Dave's sets from 2007 are available on our website at www.yourkenttv.co.uk.

Tickets to this year's performance cost £12. Doors open at 7.30pm.

For more information about the venue, visit www.tapntin.co.uk.



DOWN TO CHATHAM: Chas Hodges at the Tap 'n' Tin with Pete Doherty in 2007, the Trouser Trumpets and Tyrannosaurus Alan

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SHOPPERS have even more time to stock up on Christmas gifts with Bluewater's extended opening hours.

The shopping centre has announced a series of Mega Days which will offer more flexibility for customers as they try to beat the last-minute rush. Mega Days will take place from December 21-23 when Bluewater will be open from 9am to 11pm. Winter Wonderland will be open between 10am-11pm on those days. See www.bluewater.co.uk.

Topshop finds a place in Royal town at last

DEDICATED followers of fashion will be in heaven with the new Topshop store in Tunbridge Wells.

The new store in Calverley Road opened last week and offers a great new shopping opportunity, with the mainline collections, footwear and accessories on sale over two floors. The gents do not miss out, as there is a Topman store in the basement.

Until the opening, Topshop's only store in Tunbridge Wells was shared with Dorothy Perkins.

It'll be a laugh at book launch with Harry Hill

BAFTA-WINNING comedian Harry Hill will be signing copies of his new book at Bluewater on Thursday.

Also an author and TV presenter, Hill has Kent connections and mentioned Medway on a recent edition of ITV's hugely popular Harry Hill's TV Burp. He will be meeting fans and signing copies of Harry Hill's TV Burp Book at Waterstone's from 6pm. The book is published by Ebury Press and priced at £12.99. Call the store on 01322 624831.

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BUYING the perfect Christmas present for a loved one will be easy this year, thanks to www.shopstyle.co.uk.

In the same style as a wedding list, people can log onto the website and create their own online Christmas Wish List, choosing their ideal gifts from a selection of more than 2,000 top brands, designers and retailers. A link to the list can then be posted on Facebook, Twitter or simply emailed to friends and family.

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YOUR TV REVIEW

■ BY TOM BETTS

NEVER MIND THE BUZZCOCKS BBC2, 10pm, Wednesday

A FEW years ago I would have avoided an episode of Never Mind The Buzzcocks by any means necessary, but it has really kicked on in recent times.

It is hardly must-see TV, but slowly and surely it has become one of the better comedy shows on the box.

The reason for avoiding it before was not the subject matter, or the team captains, or even the guests.

No, the thing that ruined the show, for 18 long series, was former host Mark Lamarr.

Not only was Lamarr not funny, but he seemed to be a genuinely nasty person, to boot. He took insulting people to a new level and I cannot work out how he never got lumped for being as spiteful as he was.

I often wondered if he was just being nasty for the sake of it, in the absence of anything funny to say, as he tore strips off everyone who dared to speak and answer a question, which can kind of make a quiz pointless.

They say sarcasm is the lowest form of wit... well, that was proven by Lamarr, who ruined from day one what might have been a really good show.

Simon Amstell, the man chosen to replace Lamarr, guided the ship to funnier waters and, while he was pretty nasty too, at least his cutting lines raised a laugh or two over the course of a few series.

Now, though, the show is helmed by a series of guest presenters, much like Have I Got News For You, and it's working very well.

Angus Deayton is very much missed on HIGNFY, even all these



COMEDY COUPLE: Team captains Phil Jupitus and Noel Fielding of Never Mind The Buzzcocks

years on, but Buzzcocks has flourished with a different person in the chair each week.

Martin Freeman and Dermot O'Leary have all put in decent turns in the hot-seat of late, while new team captain Noel Fielding, of The Mighty Boosh fame, lends a touch of Camden psychedelia to the half-hour.

As a regular fixture in music magazine NME, he at least seems relevant to the essence of the show, that being pop and rock music.

Even man-mountain Phil Jupitus is starting to come out with a few decent gags. Wonders will never cease.

It had the worst of starts, and it kept going for years, but at last this is a show worth watching.

They got there in the end.

YOUR WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

BY RUSSELL GRANT



AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)
EXERTING power from behind the scenes will be effective. People are intimidated by your strong personality. Ask a diplomatic Libra to serve as your spokesperson. Of course, you'll have to share your profits with this representative, but the results will be worth it.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aquarius** 09067-531762



TAURUS (Apr 21-May 21)
IT'S time to break out of your routine. Although venturing into new territory will be scary, it will also force you to draw upon hidden emotional resources. You're a lot more courageous than you realise. Turn a deaf ear to a colleague's warnings. Your courage can move mountains.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Taurus** 09067-531753



LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)
YOU'RE giving lots of thought to the sort of work you'd like to be doing in the long-term future. Opportunities related to real estate, politics and construction are highly favoured. Fortunately, you know a powerful executive who can help you break in to such an industry.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Leo** 09067-531756



SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)
ACQUIRING business skills will be your first order of business. Fortunately, a magnetic teacher is prepared to take your knowledge to the next level. Don't be put off from applying for a position that has just opened in an important company. You have a great chance of landing this job.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Scorpio** 09067-531759



PISCES (Feb 20-Mar 20)
SPENDING time with friends will be your biggest priority. Lately, you've been putting the lion's share of your energy into work. While the results have been impressive, you can't help but feel a little lonely. Start making plans to have fun with your nearest and dearest.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Pisces** 09067-531763



GEMINI (May 22-Jun 22)
IT may be necessary to make a decision about a surgical procedure. Your love life is showing signs of strain, mainly because one of you is less invested in the relationship than the other. It may be best to break off this alliance now, before somebody gets really hurt.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Gemini** 09067-531754



VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)
YOU'LL be making the social rounds this week. An endless round of parties will crowd your calendar. Be sure to attend as many as possible. If you're single, you could lock eyes with a sexy executive from across a crowded room. This could be a match made in heaven.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Virgo** 09067-531757



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 21)
YOU'RE thinking of ways to make more money. Finding a way to sell eco-friendly or recycled materials will be a great way to turn a profit. You've always been resourceful, and this will help you get a business off the ground. Friends may not be too enthusiastic about your plans.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Sagittarius** 09067-531760



ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 20)
YOU could be asked to lead a project. Conference calls, meetings and late nights at the office could all be in the cards. You may have to issue an ultimatum to a colleague who isn't pulling their weight. In addition, a loved one resents all the time you are spending on your career.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aries** 09067-531752



CANCER (Jun 23-Jul 23)
FORMING an alliance with a seasoned professional will help you move forward. Don't try to represent yourself in court or sell real estate by yourself. An expert will be worth their weight in gold. A relative may be jealous of this alliance because it keeps them out of the loop.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Cancer** 09067-531755



LIBRA (Sep 24-Oct 23)
FAMILY matters take up the majority of your time. It's possible you'll be planning a reunion or travelling across country to see some relatives. Powerful memories of childhood motivate you to bring up a painful subject with a relative. Don't be deterred by their anger.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Libra** 09067-531758



CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)
YOUR commanding personality opens doors that were previously sealed to you. Take this opportunity to make a presentation to a powerful executive. This man will be impressed by your initiative. If you can't get ahead in your current job, think about quitting and getting another.
• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Capricorn** 09067-531761

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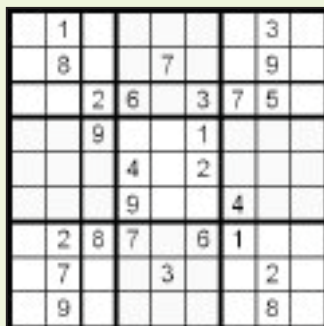
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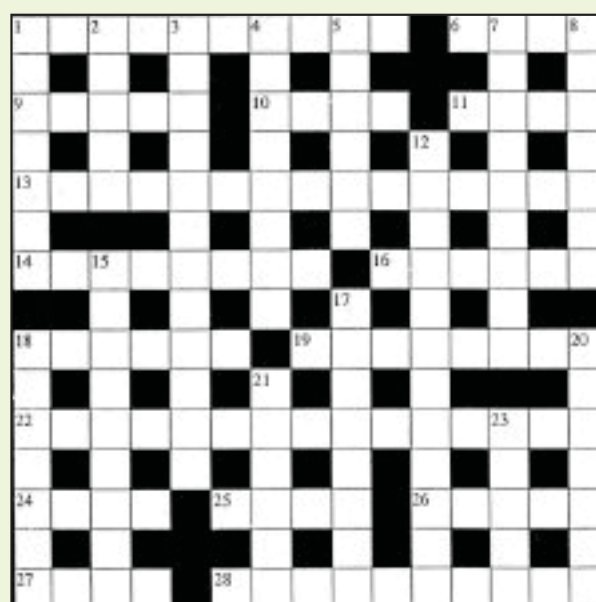
ACROSS

- 1 Frisk a para round wildlife area (6,4)
6 Tax man? (4)
9 A telephone call in a state of excitement (5)
10 Pinched some short measure (4)
11 Infernal banker (4)
13 Illegally taking the limelight? (8,3,4)
14 Drawing a puzzle and giving prize (8)
16 Unauthorised publication about robbery at sea (2)
18 A jacket not quite on fire (6)
19 More whimsical question in a true arrangement (8)
22 India was the most highly prized part of the collection (5,2,3,5)
24 Lady returning in North America (4)
25 Part of eye in art nouveau (4)
26 I pull out with one Italian man (5)
27 Said amphibian put feet on line (4)
28 Unusually wary in predicament, she could be dramatic (10)

DOWN

- 1 City bird on the water (7)
2 Lucky chance of finding ruler in chimney (5)
3 Rhythmical rowdy spree (6-6)
4 Distressing in Paignton resort (8)
5 About to quote or read aloud (6)
7 Ruthless shaver? (3-6)
8 Cab means to go on track from air-terminal to airstrip (7)
12 House that is round? Only half (12)
15 Deduction for pension (9)
17 Animal born among the gooseberries? (8)
18 It has joined from road junction (7)
20 Hurry to disturbance and act without restraint (3,4)
21 Whine from bridge partners I have left (6)
23 Old side yet to be paid (5)

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QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Good thing (4,2,4)
6 Mop (4)
9 Famous person (slang) (5)
10 Disinclined (4)
11 Tactic (4)
13 They flock together (5,2,1,7)
14 Not containing milk products (3-5)
16 Make accordant (6)
18 Sharp turning (6)
19 Canine protecting property (5,3)
22 Immediately (2,3,4,2,1,3)
24 Egg-shaped (4)
25 Surfeit (4)
26 Musical work (5)
27 Behalf (4)
28 Phrase (10)

DOWN

- 1 French Dominican monk (7)
2 Orals (anag.) (5)
3 Very industrious (2,4,2,1,3)
4 Highly inflammable composition (8)
5 Discharge (3,3)
7 Borzoi (9)
8 Laurel (3-4)
12 MA (6,2,4)
15 Prowler (9)
17 Joker (8)
18 Enthusiastic (7)
20 Alight (3,4)
21 Long-winded (6)
23 Indo-European language (5)

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LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS No116

EASY



MEDIUM



HARD



CRYPTIC SOLUTION No116

ACROSS: 1 Casca 4 Jet-skier 8 Medicine-bottle 10 Long-range 11 Wonky 12 X-ray 13 Coachman 17 Physique 18 Crab 22 Waltz 24 Vouchsafe 25 Overdramatised 26 Oleander 27 Ninth. DOWN: 1 Complex 2 Sedentary 3 Accord 4 Janine 5 Tabletop 6 Katowice 7 Ellen 9 Cyan 14 Mortal sin 15 Pizzeria 16 Quivered 17 Pawn 19 Breadth 20 Murmur 21 Photon 23 Level.

QUICK SOLUTION No117

18 Zealous 20 Get down 21 Prolix 23 Hindi. 4 Wildlife 5 Let off 7 Wolfhound 8 Bay-tree 9 Master of Arts 15 Nighthawk 17 Quipster 22 At the drop of a hat 24 Oval 25 Non-dairy 16 Affine 18 Zigzag 19 Guard 10 Loth 11 Play 13 Birds of a feather 14 ACROSS: 1 Just as well 6 Swab 9 Celeb

Answers to all of this week's quizzes can be found on our website



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ON GENERAL RELEASE

NATIVITY! (U)



Christmas comes early courtesy of British director Debbie Isitt and her improvised comedy about a primary school nativity. Martin Freeman stars as the teacher tasked with putting on the play.

HARRY BROWN (18)



Sir Michael Caine plays a vigilante pensioner hunting down a gang of council estate thugs who killed his best friend. The 76-year-old is mesmerising as a war veteran with nothing to lose.

THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS (15)



George Clooney stars in The Men Who Stare At Goats, a deranged tale of US servicemen who are trained to become Jedi warriors, capable of killing with mind-power alone. Ewen McGregor co-stars.

Gerard now makes his own laws in Hollywood

■ BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

WHEN Gerard Butler appeared on screen as King Leonidas in the stylised movie epic, 300, the world sat up and took notice. The fact he was sporting little more than a loin cloth and a six-pack no doubt helped the film gross more than \$450 million at the box office, but it was also his commanding performance that got audiences excited.

Since the film's release in 2007, the Scottish-born actor has gone on to star in the romantic drama, P.S. I Love You; Guy Ritchie's gangster movie, RocknRolla; the romcom The Ugly Truth; and all-action flick Gamer.

Such an eclectic mix of roles has proven Gerard's chameleon-like quality and is one of the reasons he can now command a reported \$15 million per movie.

His box-office clout was a deciding factor in his choosing to produce, as well as star in, his latest movie, a crime thriller called Law Abiding Citizen.

"There comes a time when you get a lot more say in which movies are going to be made, so then you want to be a little more involved and get some credit for it," says Gerard, his Scottish accent still intact despite being based in Los Angeles for most of the year.

He's wearing jeans and a leather jacket, which he removes during the interview to reveal a long-sleeved T-shirt which hints at the impressive physique that made his name.

Candid, chatty and prone to swearing intermittently, he's just turned 40 but looks five years younger.



LAW ABIDING Gerard Butler stars in new film

In Law Abiding Citizen, Gerard plays Clyde Shelton, an honest, upstanding family man whose life is left in tatters when his wife and daughter are brutally murdered.

Starring opposite him is Oscar-winning Jamie Foxx who plays Nick Rice, a young and ambitious prosecutor.

When Nick cuts a deal that spares one of the killers from death row, it proves a catalyst for Clyde to seek vengeance on the legal system and everyone who has let him down.

Gerard first came across the story for Law Abiding Citizen when a script-writer cornered him and begged him to read his script.

The story may have been pretty raw but Gerard recognised its potential.

"It was two years of slowly but surely getting

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this thing going and working on the script and developing it," he says.

"I had so much to do about how the story turned out and in actual fact some of the mistakes that were made were the few areas where I didn't stand up for myself, where I felt I wish I had believed in myself more there and trusted my gut."

He catches himself before divulging what these mistakes were, although he does reveal, "positions were filled but tasks weren't fulfilled".

"That caused the movie to take a lot longer to be made and cost a lot more money than it should have. The strange thing is, when it all came together, every possibility had been analysed a thousand times over, so it felt like it made the movie stronger in the end."

LAW ABIDING CITIZEN

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Enjoy a Lille bit of what you fancy

■ BY SHARRON LIVINGSTON

GARISH pink and silver curtains drew open, drums rolled and out came the dancing girls. A moment later the compeer asked the audience (in French): 'anyone here from Pas de Calais?' Hands went up accompanied by cheers. 'Étrangers bienvenus' – welcome strangers – he chuckled.

Strangers? We were enjoying a dinner/cabaret at La Palace Prestige, av du Peuple Belge, (think mini Moulin Rouge) in Lille, located in Northern France, bordering Belgium. It's a hop and a skip from Pas De Calais and a 40-minute dash from Calais by car, yet for the Lilloise, anywhere outside the city limits is a different country.

Twenty years ago it was a run-down industrial town but a group of companies including Auchan and Le Redout funded a city-wide face-lift to reveal a quaint, cobbled, medieval city with a distinct Flemish flavour that permeates everything from local Chiti dialect ('sh' sounds and rolling 'r's), white beers that taste like Belgian Hoegaarden, estaminets (Flemish style restaurants serving rustic Flemish food) to beautiful Flemish renaissance architecture.

The best example is at GrandPlace (aka Place du General du Gaul who was born here in 1890). The 17th century Vieille Bourse is a quadrangle of 24 ornate houses surrounding a courtyard where trading took place. Note the cute chubby cherubs and saucy female forms.

Second-hand book and flower sellers gather daily beneath the cloisters while groups of chess players meet (if you fancy a game, take



AT THE CENTRE: There's plenty to see and do in France's third largest city including great food and designer shopping

a seat) for daily tournaments.

Lille – France's third largest city after Paris and Lyon – is famous for designer shopping. Hermès, Louis Vuiton and Lacoste have taken root in rue de la Grande Chaussée mingling with smaller boutiques in Lille's oldest street, rue de la Monnaie. Printemps (think Debenhams) is on rue Nationale and the soulless Euralille shopping mall by the Eurostar terminal offers 150 shops.

Eating out in Lille is a joy. Michelin starred A l'Huitrière, rue des Chats Bossus, is a favourite. At its front is a fish shop that thinks it's an art gallery – art-deco style with splendid mosaics of fishermen at work. The restaurant at the rear offers fish dishes such as its signature dish of turbot in potato crust with butter.

If it's tea-time, there's no better place than Meert patisserie, on rue Esquermoise. Its filigree interior leads the way into a coffee shop where they serve their feted waffles (gauffres) filled with sweet Madagascar vanilla. Charles de Gaulle would buy a box or two of them to present as gifts to visiting dignitaries.

You can find out more about Charles de Gaulle at the Musée Natale du Général de Gaul museum, 9 rue de Princesse. This was his former childhood home and as well as insights into what made him tick, you'll see the room he was born, his cot and even the robe in which he was baptised. Just around the corner is the St Etienne church where baby de Gaulle got to wear it.

Don't miss the Palais des Beaux-Arts at Place de la République. Second only to the Louvre in Paris, this magnificent building houses prestigious collections of paintings, sculptures and ceramics. Allow two hours to enjoy works by Donatello (in particular the Feast of Herod sculpture), Toulouse-Lautrec, Rubens, Rodin and Delacroix and the impossibly romantic The Kiss by Carolus-Duan.

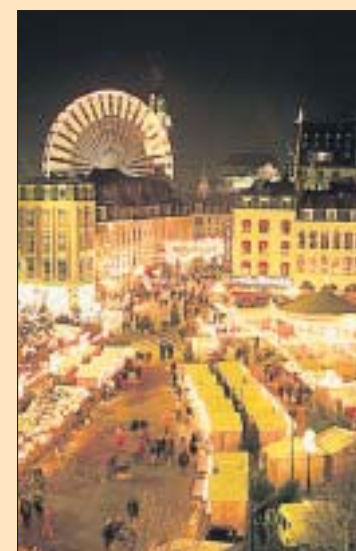
Perhaps more compelling is the factory stores at L'Usine. More than 200 brands are on sale at 70 per cent off retail prices. Best buys are at the Delsey luggage store, at Valery Bijoux for discounted jewellery and watches by designers Guess, Diesel and Dolce & Gabbana.

yourkenttv.co.uk FACT FILE: LILLE

Time difference	+1 hour
Language	French
Currency	Approx 1.1 Euro to £1
Population	1.1 million
Religion	Roman Catholic

Getting there

Getting there is easy. From London hop on the Eurostar from St Pancras, but it's for foot passengers only. If shopping is on the agenda, you will want to take your car. Sharron Livingston traveled with P&O www.poferry.com from Dover to Calais and from there take the motorway direct to Lille. Useful sites: www.lille-guide.co.uk; www.tourisme-nord.fr.



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PROPERTY NEWS

Builders to focus on houses as demand falls for apartments

BARRATT Developments is to focus on building houses rather than apartments, in response to lenders' preferences.

The group's chief executive, Mark Clare, says the company will build what it knows it can sell and in the case of apartments, lenders are making life difficult for mortgage borrowers by asking for deposits of 25 per cent.

The oversupply of new-build apartments in the UK's city centres has been causing problem for banks and building societies since the onset of the credit crisis, with evidence that some properties were deliberately overvalued in large-scale mortgage scams.

Downturn

Buy-to-let investors in particular were encouraged into the market and since the property downturn, some apartments have lost 50 per cent of their value.

The company has also revealed that overall its private reservation rates per site have been running 34 per cent ahead of last year.

Furthermore, cancellations were down to 13 per cent for the period July 1 to November 8 2009, compared with 23.7 per cent in the same period of 2008.

Lettings company is ready to expand its internet business

LETTINGSEARCH.CO.UK has announced it is set for further expansion across the UK's major towns and cities.

The firm, which claims to be the country's largest lettings-only portal, has secured increased funding to back a substantial expansion of its agent and tenant base over the next six months.

Established in 2002, Lettingsearch currently lists about 250,000 properties and averages more than one million tenant searches a month.

Agents can list any number of properties for a flat fee per branch, with no set-up costs or minimum period of advertising.

Furthermore, landlords approaching the site are redirected to appropriate lettings agents, providing an additional income stream for small and large agents alike.



There's light at the end of tunnel, say agents

■ BY NICK AMES

LEADING estate agents Strutt & Parker revealed a sharp drop in profits in its first results since converting to limited liability partnership status in May 2008.

Profits available to partners dropped 79 per cent from £16 million in 2008 to £3.3 million. Revenue was down by a quarter, from £86.3 million to £64.9 million.

However, the first six months of the current financial year have shown an improvement. The firm made a profit of £4.8 million, compared to £500,000 at the half-year stage last year.

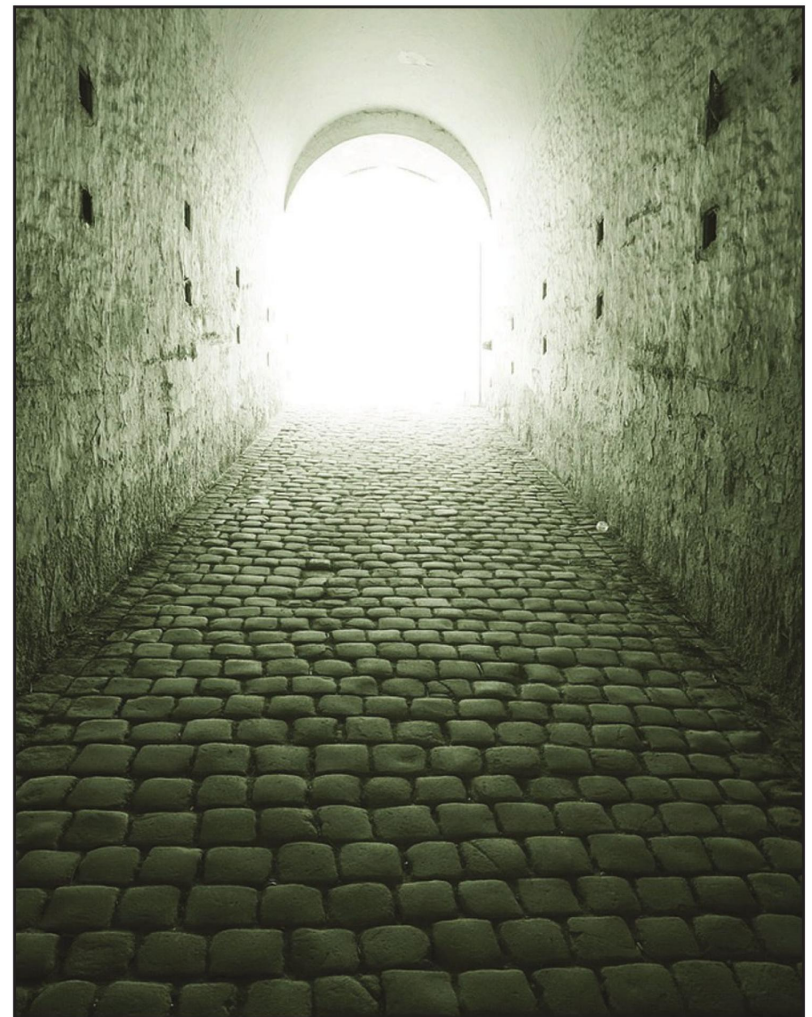
The company also says the better economy, as well as the significant saving it has made, should go some way towards recovering its performance, especially as the market appears to be regaining some level of optimism.

Senior partner Andy Martin said: "The year to April 30 we view as very much history, particularly as we have seen a good improvement in our recent results in particular the London residential team which has reported its strongest trading month ever in September."

"We, along with our competitors, faced a very tough trading environment with transactional business slowing for the last quarter of '08 and first quarter of '09. However, as with all diverse businesses, some parts performed exceptionally well whereas other parts struggled."

"Significant cost reductions and efficiencies were made during the year to adjust operating costs and these mean that as a firm we have a better platform for this market to enable us to continue to improve profitability."

"In financial terms, although it is too early to call the end of what has been the sharpest decline in values in living memory, the 2009/10 financial year has started better, with all areas of the business ahead of budgets at the six-month stage. We have maintained a high profile in our markets and have continued to build teams in important new areas of the business."



Sharp rise in empty homes 'reflects deprivation'



ACCORDING to the latest Halifax Empty Homes Survey, the number of private homes empty for at least six months soared by nine per cent during the year to April 2008.

The figure went up to 303,285, a level not seen since April 2003. The bank said the latest figures mean that 1.6 per cent of all privately-owned properties in England were empty.

Furthermore, the Halifax said when homes unoccupied for less than six months were included in the total, the figure rose to 613,270.

Properties are classed as being empty if they have been vacant for more than six months

because they are between occupants, undergoing modernisation, or in disrepair.

And the Halifax highlighted levels of deprivation were typically higher in areas that had a high proportion of vacant properties.

Suren Thiru, of the Halifax, said: "It is concerning that there are more than 300,000 private homes in England that have been empty for more than six months and the number has increased, following several years of decline."

"Often, high levels of long-term empty homes reflect relatively high levels of deprivation, low average earnings and high unemployment."



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Kennington

£290,000

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Charing Hill, OIEO £110,000
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Ashford, Asking Price £214,950
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Ashford, £99,950
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Ashford, £112,000
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Ashford, £210,000
Three Bedroom Town House. Central location with quarter of mile of Ashford town centre. Garage. Off road parking. Double glazing. Gas central heating. Balcony. Private garden.

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Ashford, OIEO £120,000
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White Willow Close £695pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom House • Master with en-suite • Cloakroom • Kitchen with white goods 	Marmion Way £750pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 bedroom house • Master with en-suite • Lounge/ Diner • Off road parking, Garage 	Sir John Fogge £725pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom House • Kitchen with white goods • Master with en-suite • Located in Repton Park 	Quarry View £795pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom House • Lounge • Dining Room • Conservatory, Garage 	Richborough Way £850pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom House • Lounge • Kitchen/ Breakfast room • Dining Room, Garage 	Bishopswood £900pcm  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Bedroom House • Master with en-suite • Family bathroom • Lounge, Dining Room

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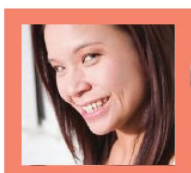
Little Burton £225,000  <div>NEW INSTRUCTION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three bedroom link detached house • En-suite to master bedroom • Spacious lounge & dining area • Modern fitted kitchen • Landscaped rear garden 	Hythe road £175,000  <div>NEW INSTRUCTION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three bedroom semi detached • Lounge & dining room • Front & rear gardens • Some modernisation required • No onward chain - priced to sell 	Kennington £219,950  <div>NEW INSTRUCTION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four bedroom semi detached • Lounge & dining room • Fitted kitchen, garden • Garage & driveway • Bathroom & shower-room
South Ashford £160,000  <div>NEW INSTRUCTION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three bedroom semi detached • Lounge • kitchen/diner • Utility room & study • 65ft rear garden 	Kennington £170,000  <div>NEW INSTRUCTION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two bedroom semi detached • Fitted kitchen • lounge • Enclosed rear garden • Central heated • double glazed 	Shadoxhurst £369,995  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four bedrooms • two bathrooms • Dining hall • kitchen • Workshop and kennels • Off road parking

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WOMEN seeking men

AS GOOD AS IT GETS Bubbly chatty female, 25, 5'3", nice personality, loves singing, music, socialising, pubs, reading, cinema, meals out; seeks attractive black male 37-43 for fun and laughter. Leeds. Box 321556

GOOD THING GOING Professional female, 29, enjoys football, badminton, cinema & socialising, seeks fun, outgoing, honest & caring male. Leeds. Box 648195

HERE'S HOPING Blue-eyed girl, 31, friendly, outgoing, loves the outdoors and meals out, enjoys meeting new people, looking for friendship maybe a relationship. Box 875762

YOURS TRULY Voluptuous lady, 30, blonde, blue eyes, likes poetry, theme parks, nights in, walking, live bands, seeks a loving man to settle down with. York. Box 459589

IT MUST BE LOVE Single mum, 31, student, enjoys running, swimming, camping, going out/staying in, looking for nice down-to-earth bloke, single dads welcome- must be a non-smoker. Bradford. Box 865407

READY FOR THIS? 34yrs, 5ft 7ins, blonde hair, green eyes, cute, friendly, fun, generous single girl for over a year now. Ready to find someone special. Box 874273

BE MINE Single, outgoing female, 34, 5'1", looking for a nice, easygoing guy to share fun times and maybe more. Selby. Box 458161

IN THE CARDS Very social woman, 35, 5'3", brown hair, green eyes, likes the outdoors, cinema, looking for friendship and more. Bradford. Box 460554

CALL ME! Single mum, 35, 5ft, blonde hair, seeking a good honest gentleman with decent values and a positive outlook for a lasting relationship. York. Box 461168

WHO KNOWS? Single mum, 35, looking for a single dad to share some time with, maybe it could be something lasting? I like cooking, socialising, outdoors. York. Box 868730

GET THE PHONE Quite attractive female, 36, 5'11", average build, blonde, enjoys live music, pub quizzes & holidays, seeks tall, dark-haired male, for all this & more. York. Box 721088

SOUND GOOD? Fun-loving female, 36, 5'4", medium build, sporty, shy, likes dogs, looking for male company. Bradford. Box 460660

ONE IN A MILLION Friendly, single mum, 36, brown eyes/dark hair, I like cinema, bowling, gigs nights out. Looking for a genuine bloke for friendship...maybe more later. Halifax. Box 457076

HOLD MY HAND Shy lady, 35, 5ft5, dark hair and eyes, single, likes going out, pictures, music and more, seeks similar male for hopeful romance. Box 457149

HEELS & WELLIES Honest, independent female, 37, 5'7", blonde, attractive, n/s, likes meals out, walks, country pubs, wine bars, seeks like minded male for relationship. Malton. Box 762305

SHOW ME HEAVEN Brunette, 37, green eyes, likes socialising and meals in quiet pubs; WLTm a kind and caring man, 37-45. Leeds. Box 869944

COUNTRY LOVER Hi, I'm an attractive, intelligent woman, with a wicked sense of humour. I'm 38, 5ft7, dark hair/blue eyes, and live in Bishop Auckland. Box 453919

A LADY TO LOVE Yorkshire lass, 40, a mum, blonde with blue eyes, 5ft5, medium build, loves swimming, eating out and dancing. WLTm genuine fun-loving male. Box 452268

HOPE TO HEAR FROM YOU Bubbly lady, 39, 5ft2, medium length blonde hair/blue eyes, slim, very GSOH, loves DVDs, cinema and all music; seeks likewise male for good times...Bishop Auckland. Box 460583

TWO TO TANGO Well travelled, smart, sprightly mum of one, 42, 5ft11, dark hair with blue eyes, hard working woman, looking for an independent, tall, like minded man. Selby. Box 459923

RECIPE FOR LOVE Country Durham female, 42, medium build, glasses, blonde hair. I'm a widow and would like to meet a genuine man. I enjoy cooking, swimming, shopping. Box 461220

MOVING ON UP Hi there I'm a 42 year old swimmer, love shopping, am a widow, just looking for someone to share my life with again. Crook. Box 455146



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A BETTER TOMORROW Interesting woman, 42, medium build, 5ft4, blonde/blue eyes. I enjoy music, cinema, nights out, countryside, sports, cosy nights in, WLTm animal-loving gent, with similar tastes. Malton. Box 461256

MANY INTERESTS Single, black mum, 5ft6, medium build, 43, brown eyes/black hair. I'm hoping to meet someone for friendship, and hopefully LTR. Box 453905

PUPPY LOVE? Fun loving & caring 43 year old looking for my soulmate, enjoys socialising, meals out & weekends away, looking for genuine male for friendship...hopefully more! Box 876111

HELLO! Attractive female, 43, 5ft5, brown hair/eyes, enjoy spending time with friends, looking for a tall, genuine guy, 35-45, for a meaningful relationship. Bradford. Box 462457

BETWEEN US Beautiful female, 44, 5ft3, blonde, blue eyes, slim build, likes sports, music, eating out, reading, looking for a genuine male for friendship and more. Keighley. Box 455173

GENUINE AND RESPECTFUL 45yr old woman, dark hair/eyes, medium build. I like walking, countryside. Seeking man with a GSOH and good personality, someone honest and genuine. Box 455309

LOOKING FOR A DANCE PARTNER 45 year old friendly lady who loves to do many different things including dancing, cinema, theatre, quizzes, days and nights in or out. York area. Box 868052

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HERE AND NOW Hello I'm a 45 year old female, on my own for 3 years, warm, honest, enjoy lots of activities, well built and looking for romance. Box 864906

FINGERS CROSSED Female smoker, 45, likes reading, TV, films; WLTm guy with GSOH who likes animals. Bishop Auckland. Box 458690

SHALL WE BE SOCIAL? Slim female, 45, 5'10", blonde, enjoys dogs, walks, car boots, meals out & socialising, seeks male 6+, similar interests, for friendship maybe more. York. Box 972442

BY MY SIDE Brunette, medium build, brown eyes, I'm a 44yr old woman and enjoy going out, nights in, line dancing and socialising. Bradford based. Box 457198

FOR GOOD SHY LADY 44, gosh, likes line dancing, cinema and socialising, looking for a man with similar interests for friendship/relationship. Bradford Box 457536

MAKE A MOVE Hello I'm a lady in darlington county Durham. I like dancing and music looking for a fun man that has the right moves. Box 457867

BE YOURSELF Blonde woman, 46, blue eyes, enjoys dining out, holidays, cosy nights in, looking for an honest, fun and genuine male. York. Box 461391

MOVE OVER, DARLING Recently divorced female (not bitter!), 47, loves animals, walks and more, seeks male with GSOH who's genuine and up for love. Darlington. Box 460428

HOPING 4 YOU Sincere, caring female, 47, own home, loves indoor sports and the outdoors, seeks decent fella, to share quality time, laughter and perhaps romance. Box 456219

WANT TO KNOW MORE? Seeking that special someone, a loving, caring, honest man. I'm an attractive woman, 47, 5ft1, with blonde hair. Allerton (Bradford). I love travel, dancing and walking. Box 458182

HURT IN THE PAST Lovely, bubbly woman, 48, divorced, grown up kids. Looking for genuine, loving, tall man. Box 457533

ONLY YOU TALL And attractive blonde, 48, divorced, well dressed, looking for a tall and handsome guy, 41-52. I like music, holidays and weekends away. York. Box 461476

WITHOUT YOU Divorced woman, 48, 5'7", blonde hair, blue eyes, likes reading, walking, music, nights in and out, seeks caring honest male for friendship and more. Box 927648

R U THE 1 A ME? Bubbly but a little bit shy woman, 49, likes socialising, eating out, concerts, cinema, looking for a male to get to know better. Halifax. Box 457378

GENUINE AND SINCERE? Hi, I'm Anne, 49, brown eyes and dark hair, slim, hard working, likes socialising, pubs, love dancing; WLTm someone to enjoy a meal and show...York. Box 456448

A WHOLE NEW WORLD Cuddly brunette, 50, 5ft7, gosh, likes walking, dog owner, loves music, looking for a happy man with gosh to start again with. Darlington. Box 871616

NO TIME WASTERS PLEASE Animal lover with two dogs, 50, 5ft1, blue eyes, slim, loves outdoor/farm life, cuddles and music, Wltm a man to settle down with. County Durham Box 455269

NORTHERN STAR 48yr old female, olive skin, likes socialising, the odd drink, lots of love to give for the right man-must be asian/middle eastern. Bradford. Box 454880

LET'S TALK Slim attractive female, 51, 5'5. Honest, loyal and caring. Lives in Darlington. Smoker. Loves music, films, reading and holidays. Looking for friendship and possible LTR. Box 872820

SEEKING SOUL MATE Seeking a single man, caring, honest and romantic. I enjoy holidays abroad, eating out. I'm very laid back woman (52), and looking for similar. Bradford. Box 873033

THIS WAY... Attractive female, 51, 5ft10, brunette, medium build, very GSOH, loves music, stand-up comedy, music, cinema & dogs! Seeks like-minded tall males for friendship/relationship. Newton Aycliffe. Box 462866

FROM ME TO YOU Loving sharing lady, 51, 5ft3, long dark hair, likes most things in life, WLTm someone special to enjoy life and fun with. Selby. Box 456493

GOSH! Lovely lady, 51, very young outgoing, positive, bubbly, short bobbed hair, attractive, very GSOH, loves getting out and about, seeks likewise tall male for companionship. Box 457315

MY MIND ON YOU Bubbly lady, 51, 5ft6, blonde, slim, looking to meet a guy who likes travel and meals out for initial friendship and then more. Bradford. Box 459834

ZEST FOR LIFE Slim female, 52, blonde, loves walking, keeping fit, lovely holidays, dining out, seeking a trusting, affectionate, and caring male. Box 461613

SHOW YOU CARE Honest, caring female, 54, slim build, blonde, N/S, GSOH, likes the countryside & animals, seeks tall, caring guy, for nights in & out. Darlington. Box 467547

MAKING THE MOST OF IT Professional 54yr old female, 5ft7, friendly, outgoing, medium build, loves animals, meals out, holidays abroad, WLTm a tall gent, solvent, for company and more. Bradford. Box 462678

SOCIAL SORT Friendly female, a mum, with a GSOH, I'm 54, 5ft1, and love animals, meals out, swimming, etc. WLTm genuine man to socialise with. York. Box 461902

THE SOCIABLE SORT Sociable lady, 54, likes good conversations, always up for a laugh, looking for a like-minded guy to hang out with. Huddersfield. Box 457368

LOOKING FOR TLC Lady in her 50's, blonde hair/blue eyes, kind, caring, romantic, likes meals out and cinema, seeking a good guy that enjoys to enjoy a meal and show...York. Box 456448

COME INTO MY WORLD Fun-loving, independent, young at heart lady, 58, enjoy travelling, walking and swimming. WLTm a similar man for friendship, possibly leading to a LTR. Bradford. Box 461152

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REPLY by Text

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MUST LOVE LIFE Fun-loving female, 59, 5'4", fair hair, medium build, gosh, enjoys films, music, seeks an easy going man 50-62, who is kind and caring. York. Box 393904

LOVE AND AFFECTION Romantic, affectionate, young looking female, 59, 5ft2, slim. I like cooking, meals out, country drives, WLTm genuine, non-smoking gent. Darlington area. Box 456332

STILL SEARCHING... A libra, I'm a genuine lady, 58, 5ft2, looking for genuine man to share my life with. Are you out there? Box 457515

HELP ME FIND LOVE AGAIN Compassionate lady, 60, works in medicine, lots of love to give, seeks a kind and considerate male in the Shipley, Bradford, or Lancashire area. Box 461955

ATTRACTIVE Tall, stylish, happy, young 60yr old, n/s, gosh, seeks honest, caring non-smoker, similar age, retired or semi retired, for happy time together. York. Box 456571

HOW CAN WE BE WRONG? Attractive, lively, sociable lady, 60, 5'2", younger in looks and personality, loves dancing, theatre, cinema, quizzes and travelling, would like companionship and fun. County Durham. Box 875882

FRIENDSHIP FIRST Slim, smart, attractive lady, 62, 5'2", no ties, works, own home and car, likes live music, dining out, good conversation, seeking a genuine, similar male. Darlington. Box 461999

CUDDLES NEEDED 63 yr old, N/S, redhead, many interests including gardening and sewing would like to meet male 60+ for friendship and maybe more. Box 875863

HOPING TO HEAR... Attractive lady, blonde, 60, nice personality, enjoys most things, seeks male, 56-70, for a warm, caring friendship/relationship. Box 876574

ANIMAL LOVER Widow, 65, looking for gent, 55-65 for friendship, maybe more. I'm petite, with blonde hair and I love dogs and enjoy cosy nights in/meal out. Bradford. Box 460520

IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS Tacile female, 60s, youthful and attractive, WLTm smart, active, social, sincere male, 60s, to share interests in music, dancing, travel and much more. County Durham. Box 455943

JUST FRIENDS Looking for a friend, I'm a 66yr old woman, with a GSOH, I enjoy camping/caravanning, holidays, meals out, and just looking for male company. Baildon. Box 456385

OWEN CALL PAM Owen, North Yorks, who responded to Pam, please get back in touch as she took down your number incorrectly. Thanks. Box 453588

LET'S GET MOVING Happy female, 68, into salsa dancing & travel, seeks genuine gent, 60s, for relationship & fun. Skipton. Box 821587

LOVE AT LAST Young-looking and acting lady, 69, 5'3", blue eyes, blonde, looking for a nice, nonsmoking gentleman for companionship and more. Wetherby. Box 461163

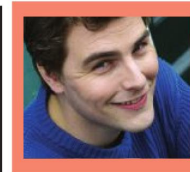
Women seeking women

A DAY OUT 22yr old female, 5ft, likes pubs, clubs, reading, socialising, WLTm like-minded female, N/S, for fun-loving relationship. Bradford Box 454911

ONE STEP AT A TIME Nice woman in Shipley, I'm 28, 5ft5, brown eyes, looking for a similar female. I like going out and trying new things. Box 457058

A BIT OF A DIFFERENCE 41yr old slim, attractive female, blonde, very down-to-earth, enjoy days out, meals out, walks, spiritualism, animals, WLTm a like-minded, homely, feminine female. Bradford. Box 455788

SAY YOU'LL BE THERE Feminine slim female, 43, 5ft5, blonde, blue eyes, likes good conversations, shopping, seeking a sweet female for fun and friendship. Bradford. Box 456633



MEN seeking women

MAYBE BABY Bradford male, 34, medium build, 5ft8, black hair, looking for a nice female for friendship, maybe a relationship. I enjoy going for walks, cinema etc. Box 462815

GENTS PREFER BLONDES American male, 34, looking for a nice, loving lady, prefer blondes with a nice figure, for fun times. Box 462911

BY THE FIRE Easygoing, friendly single dad, 35, enjoys football, winebars, eating out, holidays & cosy nights in, looking for fun-loving, easygoing female for a brighter future. Beverley. Box 462478

LET'S SEE Good-looking asian male, 36, looking for a nice asian female to get to know better and see how things go. Bradford. Box 462814

PERFECT FIT? Shy, stocky lad, 58" would like to meet someone special with the same interests, I like football, dvds/fishing, cooking, country walks and pubs. Box 869095

SHOW ME AROUND Male new to Scarborough area, 38, self employed and works hard, likes travelling, seeks nice, active, single female for fun. Box 869437

A BIT SHY... Professional 37yr old man, 5ft11, bit of a belly, gosh, into music, play the guitar, looking to meet a lady of similar age. York. Box 460016

CUDDLES ON OFFER Bradford bloke, 38, 5ft9, brown hair/eyes, likes cars, motorsports, going to the picture, seeking a genuine female for a serious relationship. Box 459581

FIELDS OF GOLD Good-looking male, 38, into going out, keeping fit, reading, days out, countryside & driving. LTR. Box 459581

LIFE BEGINS NOW Divorced man, 56", 49 years old, love travel, dining out, I enjoy being out and about, caring and honest, looking for ladies in Bradford. Box 458450

SWEET LIKE CHOCOLATE Young looking 50, I'm a single, easy-going, genuine guy, no ties. I like nights in/out, sport, WLTm nice, honest woman in the West Yorkshire area. Box 460191

PERSONALITY COUNTS Smart male, 53, slim, fit and active, wears glasses, clean shaven, seeks African/Indian/Asian woman, 18-65, looks unimportant, for a good, happy life. Bradford. Box 460811

YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING Level headed, broad minded, decent looking male, 53, WLTm a fun-loving, feminine female to wine, dine and woo. York. Box 867921

ALL TO COME Hi I'm Dave, 55 from York, 5ft8, stocky, green eyes, short hair, hard working, like swimming and walks, WLTm social lady for potential romance. Box 459015

LOOKING FOR YOU! Loyal, active gent with a GSOH. I'm 58, down-to-earth and warm hearted. I like golf, keeping fit, trips away, pubs meals etc. York based. Box 458868

SHY GUY Caring, loving male, 40, own home, GSOH, likes pool/snooker, football, pubs, clubs, beach walks, seeks genuine female for LTR. Bradford. Box 458366

READY FOR LOVE? Nice guy looking for nice lady...I'm 41, very outgoing, humorous with positive outlook, many normal interests, seeking lady of any description to get to know. Bradford. Box 461380

TABLE FOR TWO Attractive asian male, 42, long hair, likes good wine, keeping fit, clubbing, looking for a nice female to share nice evenings out with. Box 456746

SING YOUR HEART OUT I love, 43, 5ft8, slim, blue/green eyes. I love music, drawing/painting, films, meals out, cosy nights in. Bradford. Seeking nice female, preferably a singer. Box 462238

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MAKE A FRIEND Widowed gent, 58, 5ft4, GSOH, likes meals out, walks, films, music, cosy nights, gardening, seeking a similar woman for friendship. York. Box 461698

HI! Fun-loving male, 58, short brown/gray hair, med build, 5ft7, looking for an attractive slim female for good times, maybe something long term. Box 864813

STEP-UP! Widow dad, 58, 5ft5, GSOH, likes meals out, walks, films, music, cosy nights, gardening and dancing. WLTm warm-hearted woman for LTR. York. Box 875848

TIME TO MOVE ON Genuine male, 55, large build, enjoys meals out, holidays, pub quizzes, seeks friendly, affectionate female for an honest relationship. Box 801281

EXCEPTIONAL LOVE Exceptional man, 59, seeks exceptional woman, 45-55, to increase happiness levels in his life. Box 876389

LOOKING FORWARD Great guy, York based, I'm 60, 5ft11, well built, fit. I'm divorced (grown up kids), and looking for a fresh start, and hopefully romance. Box 461234

HAPPY TIMES Warm hearted loving male, 60, young outlook, tall and slim, looking for a nice, slim attractive lady, 5ft2-5ft6, 55-65, to share a happy life with. York. Box 459306

ETERNAL FLAME Silver fox, 65, blue eyes, likes trips to the coast, home life, holidays abroad, WLTm a nice, calm and considerate lady for friendship, hopefully more. York. Box 454363

TLC WANTED Selby, North Yorkshire, I'm a widower, 68, tall and slim, fit and active. I have a family unit, OHAC and seeking nice lady. Box 467627

A FAMILY MAN Fit and active widower, young 68, OHAC, genuine and sincere, loves dogs, looking for a nice lady to shower with love and affection. Selby. Box 457703

HAND IN HAND York male, 68, good looking widower, young acting, very sincere, genuine, affectionate. Box 457627

MAKE A REAL FRIEND I am a 74 year old male, 6ft, own flat and would like to meet similar aged lady for friendship, outings etc. York. Box 868324

Men seeking men

BIG FUN Fun, overweight male, 38, into most things, searching for active male, for friendship and more. Keighley. Box 453700

TAN THE MAN Genuine male, 42, 6', GSOH, tanned, good-looking, into the gym & keep fit, seeks similar with fit body for fun times. Darlington. Box 123184

GET BACK TO ME Stocky male, 52, 5ft10, looking for friendship/relationship with an older man, I'm fun, friendly and reliable. Bradford. Box 461424

FIT THE BILL? I'd like to meet a male for fun and friendship. I'm an outgoing, healthy and fit guy, 58. Bradford area. Box 456992

GIVE ME YOUR LOVE Feminine happy male, 59, seeking a fit and active male for friendship and love. York. Box 460414

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MOTORS NEWS



Increase in sales sees Jaguar bounding back

JAGUAR is showing its claws again after an impressive 50 per cent leap in November sales against the same month in 2008.

The XK coupé and well-received XF saloon (pictured) led the charge with sales up 78.4 and 149 per cent respectively.

Jaguar UK MD Geoff Cousins said: "The momentum for XF just keeps on going. We have now sold more XF models so far this year, in its second year in showrooms, than we did at the same point in 2008, when we launched."



Chevy pricing sparks a great deal for New Year

SPARKS are set to fly out of showrooms early in 2010, after news that Chevrolet's new city car will be little more expensive than the Matiz it replaces.

Assuming that VAT returns to 17.5 per cent at New Year as planned, the Spark starts at £6,495, for a state-of-the-art mini motor that has just gathered four stars overall and five for child protection in the Euro NCAP safety test.

Order books open next week for Spring delivery, so look for deals on the outgoing Matiz.



Hyundai gives its Ford Focus rival 2010 update

FAST-growing Hyundai has updated its impressive Ford Focus challenger for 2010.

Still backed by the Korean brand's standard five-year warranty, the i30 five-door and estate range (pictured) features new models, more kit and lower emissions. It goes on sale on January 4 priced from £12,000.

The Classic 1.6 CRDi costs £12,950 – a £1,140 price cut for the cheapest i30 diesel. 'Stop and Go' technology is available as a special order option on i30s to bring tax and fuel savings.



KEEPING TRACK: The Outlander's drive options should outclass rivals such as the Toyota RAV4 and Honda CR-V with the added extra of locking the car in front-wheel for economy

Outlander gains firm acceptance this time

CURIOUS how two generations of Mitsubishi Outlander have suited the name in contrasting ways.

The original (2004-07) probably invented the term 'crossover' by mixing off-roader and chunky estate, but was doomed to be an 'outlander' with UK buyers – a dipsomaniac 2.0-litre petrol engine was the only power option.

However, its successor fits the Outlander name as Mitsubishi intended, suggesting suitability for life in the country or on the frontier.

It is also offered with two diesel options as well as another thirsty petrol unit, which we'll ignore after this.

The 2.0 DI-D SE (£19,999 and entry model for range) test car has a proven 140bhp VW diesel that can be coarse under acceleration, but pulls well and cruises smoothly thanks to a slick six-speed 'box.

The alternative is a 154bhp 2.2-litre and I know this is impressive too, having tried it in the Mitsi's Citroën C-Crosser and Peugeot 4007 cloned sisters.

The 2.0-litre Mitsubishi is the cheapest diesel though, starting at £19,999 and now with more standard kit.

ROAD TEST MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER

BY STEVE LOADER

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Green rating	★★★★★

Would-be Toyota RAV4 and Honda CR-V buyers should also check it out for the ace up its sleeve – a no-cost option of two extra though basic seats.

While I could not test it, the Mitsi's various drive options should outclass the above rivals in gentle off-roading too.

The driver can lock the car in front-wheel drive for economy, though this allows scrambling if you accelerate too enthusiastically on damp or loose surfaces.

So the preferred default is '4WD auto' – fixed format with most 'soft-rollers' – which is essentially front-wheel drive too, but rear wheels automatically add drive and grip if a loss of traction is sensed at the front; '4WD Lock' does what it says, locking drive to all four wheels for muddy tracks, fields or snowfalls.

Like most 4x4s though, Outlander owners will rarely ask it to flex its muscles, so simply being a classy drive is a big plus; body roll is well controlled for a high vehicle and the car grips and rides with great composure.

It is also a handy MPV too with plenty of stowage and a serious cargo area when all rear seats are folded – this is also easily loaded via a split tailgate.



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2006 56	SAAB 9-3 1.9TD Vector Sport, 4 Doors, Manual, Saloon, Diesel, 10,500 miles, Met grey, Heated door mirrors, Radio/CD, Rear headrests, Steering wheel reach adjustment, Cruise control, Front electric windows, Alloy wheels, Immobiliser, Electric door mirrors, Rear electric windows, ABS, Sports seats, Front fog lights, Front head restraints, Remote central locking, Drivers airbag, Anti theft system, Electric mirrors, Alarm, Front armrest, PAS, Air con, Central locking, C/C, Foglights, FSH, Sat Nav, Mobile phone Bluetooth connection, Business Pack, 6 Speed gearbox.....	£8,295
2004	SAAB 9-3 1.9TD Linear, 4 Doors, Manual, Diesel, 47,000 miles, Metallic Steel Grey, ABS, Air conditioning, Alarm, Alloy wheels, Cloth seat trim, Full Electric Pack, Full Service History, Park distance control, Traction control.....	£7,495
2005 05	SAAB 9-3 1.8T Linear Sport, 4 Doors, Automatic, Saloon, Petrol, 63,277 miles, Metallic Grey, 2 Owners, Cruise control, Alloy wheels, Immobiliser, Multi function steering wheel, ABS, Cloth seat trim, Full Electric Pack, Reverse parking aid, Part Service History, Air conditioning, Climate Control, Park distance control.....	£7,295
2002 52	SAAB 9-5 2.3HOT Aero, 4 Doors, Manual, Saloon, Petrol, 69,000 miles, Steel Grey, ABS, Alloy wheels, Full Electric Pack, Cruise control, Park distance control, Sports seats, Traction control, Climate control, In Car Entertainment, Warranty, Leather upholstery, Metallic paintwork, Tinted glass.....	£5,495
2001 Y	SAAB 9-3 2.2 TID SE, 5 Doors, Manual, Hatchback, Diesel, 122,000 miles, Metallic blue, 2 Owners, Rear wiper, ABS, Air conditioning, Heated door mirrors, Alloy wheels, Cruise control, Folding rear seats, Immobiliser, Radio/CD, Rear headrests, Steering wheel reach adjustment, Front electric windows, Electric door mirrors, Rear electric windows, Audio remote control, Front head restraints, Front fog lights, Central locking, Passenger airbag, Remote central locking, Foglights, Drivers airbag, Trip computer, Full Service History, Alarm, Climate Control, Cloth upholstery, Headlight washers, Body coloured bumpers, Rear armrest, PAS, Child locks, Service indicator, Insurance Group: 12.....	£3,295

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FIESTA, 1.4 Zetec TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power fold mirrors power steering reverse parking aid tinted glass traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, squeeze green, 4288 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.25 Style, 2007, cd player drivers airbag electric windows full service history immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking, blue, 13840 miles, £7500, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ZETEC, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser metallic paint power fold mirrors multiple airbags power steering reverse parking aid split folding rear seats tinted glass traction control trip computer curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking multi functional tuneport (i-pod and mp3 connection) quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, avalon, 12800 miles, £11000, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Titanium TDCi, 2008, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog 3846 miles, £12000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, TDCi Zetec S, 2008, metallic vision, 10040 miles, £12499, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, TITANIUM, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint multiple airbags power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking auto headlights and wipers quickclear windscreen, avalon, 1613 miles, £12000, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.4 TDCi ZETEC, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player central locking diesel electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering split folding rear seats tinted 14260 miles, £11500, Ramsgate, 0844 856 4496 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ZETEC, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player electric windows immobiliser metallic paint multiple airbags power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass trip computer remote central locking multi functional tuneport (i-pod and mp3 connection) quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, avalon, 12800 miles, £11000, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, TDCi Titanium, 2009, pearlescent hot magenta, 12138 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, TDCi Zetec, 2009, metallic panther black, 8641 miles, £12069, Ramsgate, 0844 856 4496 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.4 Style Plus TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows full service history immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, panther black, 16414 miles, £10000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Titanium, 2009, pearlescent hot magenta, 2415 miles, £12473, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, TDCi Econetic, 2009, solid colorado red, 3345 miles, £11926, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ECONETIC AIR CON, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning remote central locking, morello, 3925 miles, £11200, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, GHIA, 2006, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser metallic paint leather interior power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass remote central locking quickclear windscreen, moon dust silver, 8150 miles, £8000, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Tdci, 359180, ply-lined, tailgate, radio cassette, power steering, immobiliser, remote central locking, white, 16000 miles, £3695, Sevenoaks, 01474 853034 (TRADE)

FIESTA, LX 16v 3dr, kd54 hza, remote central locking, remote alarm, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, electric front windows, electric mirrors, cd player, radio, twin air bags, cloth upholstery, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, abs, power steering, blue, 35600 miles, £4495, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Style Climate 16v 5dr Auto, la06 mxo, air conditioning, power steering, abs, remote central locking, remote alarm, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, electric front windows, electric mirrors, cloth upholstery, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, blue, 29600 miles, £5995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Studio 16v 3dr, ks06 eke, power steering, abs, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, central locking, cloth upholstery, radio cassette, adjustable steering column, mauve, 23200 miles, £5495, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Ghia 16v 5dr, fg02 xhu, air conditioning, power steering, abs, electric front windows, electric mirrors, remote central locking, remote alarm, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, front fog lamps, cloth upholstery, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, alloy wheels, black, 59000 miles, £3995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Ghia 16v 5dr Auto, jm53 hnm, air conditioning, power steering, abs, remote central locking, remote alarm, front fog lamps, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, electric front windows, electric mirrors, cloth upholstery, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, alloy wheels, blue, 38200 miles, £4995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 16v Ghia 5dr, en05 wkt, full leather, air conditioning, abs, power steering, front fog lamps, remote central locking, remote alarm, electric front windows, electric mirrors, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, rear headrests, rear wash/wipe, alloy wheels, silver, 48600 miles, £5995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Freedom 16v 5dr, gj56 zgk, air conditioning, power steering, abs, cd player, radio, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, remote alarm, remote central locking, electric front windows, electric mirrors, cloth upholstery, adjustable steering column, height adjustable seat, twin air bags, trip computer, alloy wheels, black, 43800 miles, £6495, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Ghia 16v 5dr, mk07 xrp, full leather, air conditioning, power steering, abs, rain-sensing wipers, front fog lamps, remote central locking, remote alarm, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, electric front windows, electric mirrors, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, auto lighting, alloy wheels, black, 20600 miles, £7995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Zetec Climate 16v 5dr Auto, ld58 fwh, air conditioning, power steering, abs, remote central locking, remote alarm, front fog lamps, rear wash/wipe, rear headrests, cloth upholstery, electric mirrors, powered folding mirrors, electric front windows, height adjustable seat, adjustable steering column, cd player, radio, twin air bags, trip computer, auto lighting, alloy wheels, blue, 370 miles, £8995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Fun Encore 3dr, lv51 vma, power steering, rear wash/wipe, cloth upholstery, radio cassette, air bag, white, 31600 miles, £2495, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Black 16v 3dr, eo53 sva, full leather, air conditioning, power steering, front fog lamps, remote central locking, remote alarm, rear wash/wipe, black, 50000 miles, £4995, Plumstead, 020 8855 4000 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.25 STYLE, 2009, abs brakes central locking electric windows power steering single cd player trip computer twin airbags remote central locking, blazer blue, 8 miles, £10999, Ramsgate, 0844 856 4496 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ZETEC CLIMATE, 2006, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player electric windows full service history immobiliser metallic paint power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, 3218 miles, £7500, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Ghia, 2007, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser metallic paint power fold mirrors leather interior multiple airbags power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, black, 21024 miles, £8000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, GHIA, 2006, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser metallic paint leather interior power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass remote central locking quickclear windscreen, jeans blue, 17719 miles, £7600, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, Style, 2007, abs brakes cd player electric windows immobiliser multiple airbags power steering trip computer remote central locking, black, 18764 miles, £6500, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ST, 2007, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player central locking drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser leather interior power steering sports seats tinted glass traction control trip computer remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, blue, 27848 miles, £7500, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, ZETEC CLIMATE, 2007, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player electric windows immobiliser power steering split folding rear seats tinted glass remote central locking quickclear windscreen, colorado, 17000 miles, £7700, Canterbury, 0844 856 4494 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.25 Style, 2008, air conditioning cd player drivers airbag electric windows full service history immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, vision blue, 13720 miles, £10500, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.25 Style 82PS Sigma, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning cd player drivers airbag electric windows immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking isofix child seat points remote audio controls, squeeze green, 81 miles, £9000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Ghia, 2007, air conditioning cd player drivers airbag electric windows full service history immobiliser power steering twin airbags remote central locking, red, 14443 miles, £8000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.4 Zetec TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking multi functional tuneport (i-pod and mp3 connection) quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, panther black, 7892 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Zetec TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering reverse parking aid tinted glass traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, hot magenta, 1919 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Zetec S TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser power steering tinted glass traction control trip computer twin airbags remote central locking remote audio controls, colorado red, 5242 miles, £12000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIesta, 1.6 Zetec TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power fold mirrors power steering reverse parking aid traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, squeeze green, 6873 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Titanium TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering reverse parking aid tinted glass traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking auto headlights and wipers quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, hot magenta, 2718 miles, £11500, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Titanium TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering reverse parking aid tinted glass traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking auto headlights and wipers quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, squeeze green, 2793 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.6 Titanium, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels bluetooth car kit cd player drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser metallic paint power steering reverse parking aid traction control trip computer twin airbags curtain airbags front parking sensors remote central locking multi functional tuneport (i-pod and mp3 connection) quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, panther black, 4642 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.4 Titanium TDCi, 2009, abs brakes air conditioning alarm fitted alloy wheels cd player diesel drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights immobiliser power steering reverse parking aid tinted glass trip computer twin airbags remote central locking auto headlights and wipers quickclear windscreen remote audio controls, colorado red, 4790 miles, £11000, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

FIESTA, 1.25 Zetec Blue, 2008, abs brakes air conditioning alloy wheels cd player drivers airbag electric windows front fog lights full service history immobiliser metallic paint power steering trip computer twin airbags remote central locking, black, 27595 miles, £7500, Ashford, 0844 826 5918 (TRADE)

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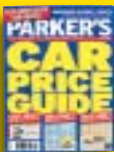
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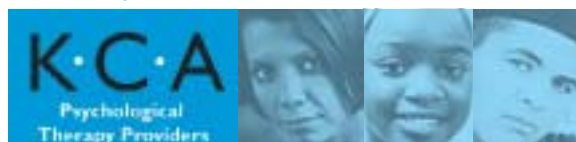
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21 hours per week, 40 weeks per year

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Closing Date: Wednesday 16 December 2009

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Application forms and further details are available from www.midkent.ac.uk. Alternatively, please e-mail job.applications@midkent.ac.uk. For individuals without access to e-mail or the internet please call the HR department on 01634 884402 (24 hour answer machine). In all communication with the College please quote the appropriate job title and reference number.

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GOAL: Ashford score their second goal on Saturday

HOCKEY

Title hopes are back on track

Ashford 2 Gore Court 0

ASHFORD men's 1st XI helped their South Hockey League Premier Division Two title hopes with a comfortable win against league leaders Gore Court.

The defence produced one of their best performances of the season to keep Gore Court, and the league's top scorer Aaron Glass, quiet. Goals from Paul Cheap and Andy Hill were enough to secure 2-0 win.

The result keeps Ashford in fourth place in the division, but the victory has closed the gap in the title race with four points separating the top six teams. This Saturday Chris Smith's side travel to sixth-placed Wycombe.

After beating the league leaders on Saturday, Ashford were involved in an epic 7-6 win against Bexley & Bromley in the Kent Cup on Sunday.

The game was forced into extra-time with the score 4-4. Ashford looked to be heading out of the competition as Bexley & Bromley took a 6-4 lead early in extra-time. However, Smith's side fought back to earn a 7-6 win to go into the next round.

Ashford ladies 1st XI suffered their first defeat of the Kent Hockey Premier season, with a 1-0 loss to Holcombe.

The defeat means Hayley Richards' side slipped three points adrift of league leaders Sevenoaks, but they are back in action this Saturday at Old Williamsonsians. The ladies 2nd XI secured a routine 2-0 win against Holcombe to stay second in Kent Division Two.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SPORTS STORIES TO SPORTS EDITOR GLENN PEARSON AT

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OVER: Benn Barham faces a possible return to the European Challenge Tour after having failed to earn a Tour card at Qualifying School last week

Picture ADY KERRY

Benn concedes defeat after Q-School howler

GOLF

■ BY TOM HOWARD

BENN Barham admitted he only has himself to blame after failing to earn a European Tour card for 2010 at Qualifying School last week.

The Ashford golfer, who finished 133rd in the European Tour rankings this season, travelled to Spain to take part in Qualifying School hoping to keep his tour dreams alive by earning one of 30 available Tour cards.

After five average rounds, the 33-year-old

needed to shoot the round of his life in the final round at the PGA Golf Catalunya resort. Beginning the day tied 58th, he needed to make up six shots to move into the top-30, but returned to the clubhouse having picked up just one shot, leaving him in tied 63rd place.

Barham was disappointed with his performance on Tour and at Qualifying School, describing his year as "a rollercoaster", largely after missing out on winning his first Tour event at September's Austrian Open by a single shot.

That victory would have given him a five-year exemption on the European Tour.

He said: "At the end of the day I just couldn't get my game going and if I had holed two more putts on each round I would have won a Tour card. I've only got myself to blame. I could look

back at Austria and say I should have won the tournament, but somebody shot a 60 and you just cannot legislate for that. I had plenty of opportunities to play well on the Tour and the truth is I didn't."

Despite missing out on finishing in the top-30 at Qualifying School, Barham believes his European ranking should secure him entry into ten European Tour events during the course of next season. He also hopes to fill his time with a return to the European Challenge Tour for the first time since 2005.

He said: "I think things we will work out okay next season as I will play a few European Tour events, but it's probably what I needed in a way to buck my ideas up and get my game sorted."

"If there are a few Challenge Tour events I fancy, then I will take part in those."

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Postponements won't dampen Lovell's resolve

FOOTBALL

BY TOM HOWARD

AFTER two postponements in a week, Ashford Town boss Steve Lovell is not worried at the prospect of fixture congestion in the New Year.

The wet weather has hit the club hard in recent weeks, with five games called off due to a waterlogged pitch in the last four weeks. On Saturday, Town were due to take on Metropolitan Police, but one area of the Homelands turf which was badly waterlogged forced the game to be postponed.

The last time Ashford played at Homelands was on November 18 against Tilbury in the Ryman League Cup. Despite 11 postponements so far this season, Lovell is not worried about a possible fixture pile up.

He said: "There is nothing you can do about the weather, we've just got to live with it. The referee made the right decision to call the game off on Saturday because there was one area of the pitch which was dangerous. We held a training session instead, but it does mean we are going to have to play a lot of games in the New Year.

"We have had to do it before and playing Saturday, Wednesday and Saturday again, it is just like training twice a week. We will cope. The one plus we can take from the postpone-



WATERLOGGED: Ashford Town boss Steve Lovell hopes the Homelands pitch will recover soon after heavy rain

ments is it allows our injured players to return. Paul Jones is now just two weeks away, while Toby Ashmore and Joe Fuller should be back in a week's time."

Town should return to action this Saturday when they travel to face Leatherhead. The Surrey side are 14th in the Ryman South

table, ten points above Ashford. The two sides met previously this season, which resulted in a 2-0 FA Cup defeat for Ashford in September.

Lovell said: "It would be great to a game under our belts and we have already played them before in the cup this year so we know what they are about."

LEAGUE TABLE

(Not including midweek games)

RYMAN DIVISION ONE SOUTH

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Folkestone Invicta	19	13	5	1	+17	44
2 Worthing	20	14	1	5	+21	43
3 Godalming Town	18	12	2	4	+16	38
4 Walton & Hersham	19	11	4	4	+9	37
5 Croydon Athletic	17	9	5	3	+19	32
6 Fleet Town	18	10	2	6	+12	32
7 Ramsgate	18	8	4	6	+4	28
8 Merstham	18	8	4	6	+1	28
9 Chatham Town	20	8	3	9	-3	27
10 Dulwich Hamlet	19	6	7	6	0	25
11 Corinthian-Casuals	19	7	3	9	-3	24
12 Metropolitan Police	18	5	7	6	+5	22
13 Sittingbourne	16	6	4	6	+2	22
14 Leatherhead	16	6	3	7	+3	21
15 Burgess Hill Town	16	6	3	7	-1	21
16 Whyteleafe	19	6	2	11	0	20
17 Walton Casuals	18	5	4	9	-7	19
18 Horsham YMCA	18	4	7	7	-12	19
19 Eastbourne Town	19	3	6	10	-11	15
20 Whitstable Town	18	4	1	13	-25	13
21 Ashford Town	16	2	5	9	-27	11
22 Chipstead	17	2	4	11	-20	10

FIXTURES (Saturday): Ryman Division One South:

Leatherhead v Ashford Town



READY: Ashford's players will be raring to go at Sittingbourne after Saturday's postponement

Pictures IGOR KUPCO

Ashford left kicking their heels

AN absent referee forced Ashford's Kent 1 clash with Gillingham Anchorians to be postponed on Saturday.

Both teams were all ready to play but miscommunication with the referee saw him fail to arrive at Kinney's Field. Ashford official, and qualified referee, David Burdon offered to take charge of the game, but Gillingham declined, leaving no option but to postpone the game.

Ashford head coach Dai Fussell said: "The boys were frustrated as they were really up for the game. I think at the end of the day it was down to miscommunication with the referee. Gillingham offered to play a friendly, but I didn't want to risk my players with games coming up. In the end we just had a training session and a bit of team-building by watching the Barbarians game."

RUGBY

Ashford should return to Kent 1 action with a trip to second-placed Sittingbourne this Saturday. After three consecutive defeats, Ashford will be keen to reignite their season and Fussell believes his players will be eagerly anticipating the game.

He said: "After last Saturday the boys will be really fired up against Sittingbourne. The boys have been working really hard over the last few weeks, but we have been unlucky."

"We have got two more away games before Christmas and if we can pick up wins it would change our season."

"The league is very tight at the moment, so we could be right amongst it with a couple of results."

SUPERBIKES



Picture GSE RACING

MEMORIES: GSE Racing celebrate winning the 2008 championship with Kent rider Shane Byrne

No sponsor could signal end for GSE

TEN years competing at the top of the British Superbike Championship could be over for GSE Racing who are on the verge of quitting the sport.

The superbike team, formed by Ashford businessman Darrell Healey, has become the British Superbike Championship's most successful team with five titles. However, with main sponsor Airwaves ending a five-year deal, GSE Racing are on the brink of extinction as they struggle to find funds to enter the 2010 championship.

Since their formation in 1998, the Ashford-based team have helped produce a number of successful riders, including three-time world champion Troy Bayliss, Leon Haslam, Gregorio Lavilla, Sheppey's Shane Byrne and Ashford's Leon Camier.

Team principal Healey admitted he fears his team have run their last race unless they find a new sponsor soon. All that after GSE experienced their most successful season to date having won 23 of the 26 races in the British Superbike Championship, as Camier took the title.

He said: "It's a massive shame for the entire team if we cannot continue. It has been hard telling all of our staff that they may not have a job next year, but at the moment things are not looking great. We have had interest from two or three sponsors and had an offer, but the company withdrew the bid."

"We've had a great time in the British Championship and we couldn't really have done anymore. We have won titles with Ducati and Yamaha bikes, so if we do end we will finish on a high."

If the team fail to find a sponsor, GSE Racing hope to continue their involvement in superbike racing by sponsoring former rider Camier as he steps up to the World Superbike Championship next year.

Healey said: "We've been associated with Leon since 2001 when he was racing 125cc bikes and it was great to have him back in the team for the last two years. Another option if we can't run a team is to help Leon and maybe Shane Byrne. If we can help them out, that would be great."

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Mark Stimson explains why the next few weeks could be crucial to his side's season

The Raja Of Kent

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